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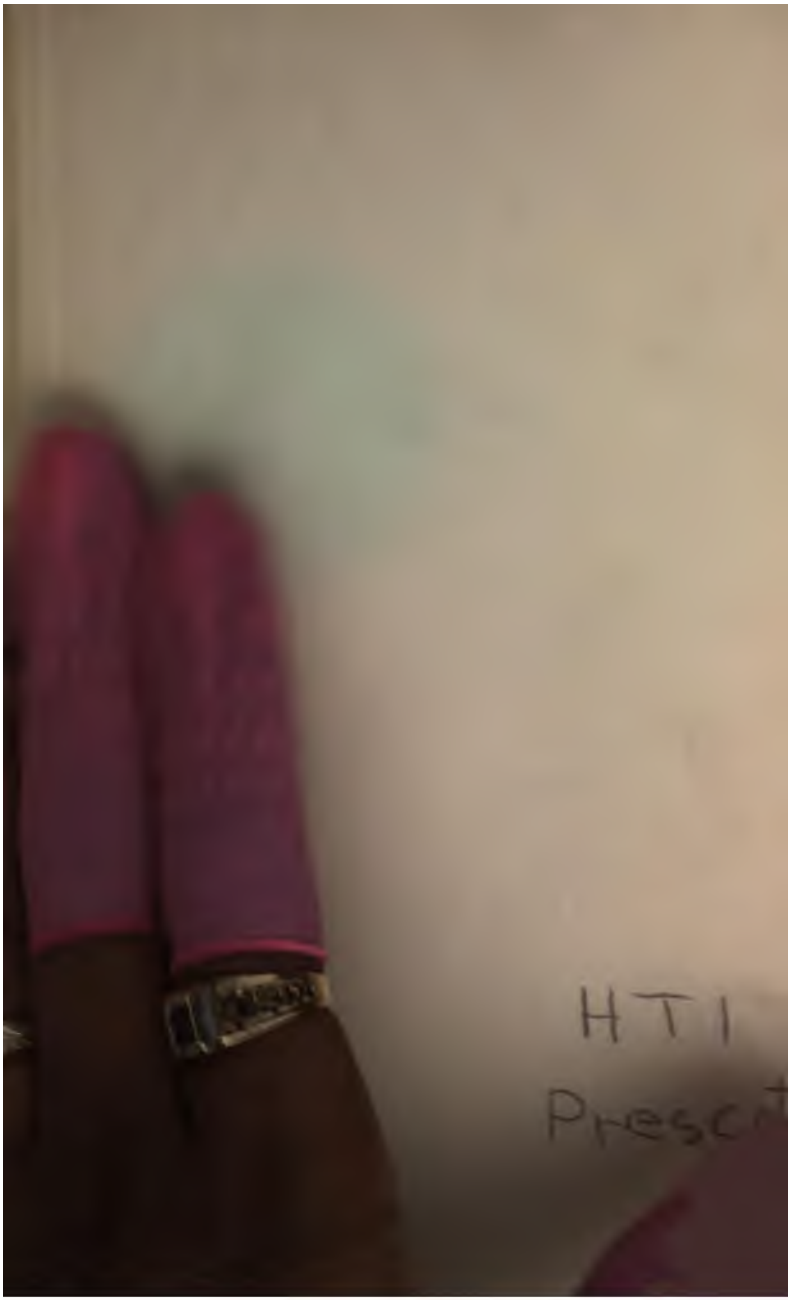
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OF THE

CONQUEST OF MEXICO.

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HERNANDO CORTES,

Conqueror of Mexico.

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HISTORY

OF THE

CONQUEST OF MEXICO,

WITH A PRELIMINARY VIEW OF THE

ANCIENT MEXICAN CIVILIZATION,

AND THE LIFE OF THE CONQUEROR,

HERNANDO CORTÉS.

By WILLIAM H. PRESCOTT,

AUTHOR OF THE "HISTORY OF FERDINAND AND ISABELLA," "HISTORY OF THE CONQUEST OF PERU," ETC.

"Victrices aquilas alium laturus in orbem."
LUCAN, Pharsalia, lib. v., v. 238.

NEW AND REVISED EDITION,

WITH THE AUTHOR'S LATEST CORRECTIONS AND ADDITIONS.

EDITED BY JOHN FOSTER KIRK.

IN THREE VOLUMES.—VOL. I.

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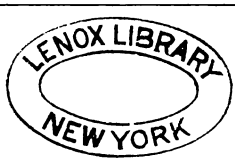

PREFACE.

As the Conquest of Mexico has occupied the pens of Solís and of Robertson, two of the ablest historians of their respective nations, it might seem that little could remain at the present day to be gleaned by the historical inquirer. But Robertson's narrative is necessarily brief, forming only part of a more extended work; and neither the British nor the Castilian author was provided with the important materials for relating this event which have been since assembled by the industry of Spanish scholars. The scholar who led the way in these researches was Don Juan Baptista Muñoz, the celebrated historiographer of the Indies, who, by a royal edict, was allowed free access to the national archives, and to all libraries, public, private, and monastic, in the kingdom and its colonies. The result of his long labors was a vast body of materials, of which unhappily he did not live to reap the benefit himself. His manuscripts were deposited, after his death, in the archives of the Royal Academy of History at Madrid; and that collection was subsequently augmented by the manuscripts of Don Vargas Ponçe, President of the Academy, obtained, like those of Muñoz, from different quarters, but especially from the archives of the Indies at Seville.

On my application to the Academy, in 1838, for permission to copy that part of this inestimable collection relating to Mexico and Peru, it was freely acceded to, and an eminent German scholar, one of their own number, was appointed to superintend the collation and transcription of the manuscripts; and this, it may be added, before I had any claim on the courtesy of that respectable body, as one of its associates. This conduct shows the advance of a liberal spirit in the Peninsula since the time of Dr. Robertson, who complains that he was denied admission to the most important public repositories. The favor with which my own application was regarded, however, must chiefly be attributed to the kind offices of the venerable President of the Academy, Don Martin Fernandez de Navarrete, a scholar whose personal character has secured to him the same high consideration at home which his literary labors have obtained abroad. To this eminent person I am under still further obligations, for the free use which he has allowed me to make of his own manuscripts,—the fruits of a life of accumulation, and the basis of those valuable publications with which he has at different times illustrated the Spanish colonial history.

From these three magnificent collections, the result of half a century's careful researches, I have obtained a mass of unpublished documents, relating to the Conquest and Settlement of Mexico and of Peru, comprising altogether about eight thousand folio pages. They consist of instructions of the Court, military and private journals, correspondence of the great actors in the scenes, legal instruments, contemporary chronicles,

and the like, drawn from all the principal places in the extensive colonial empire of Spain, as well as from the public archives in the Peninsula.

I have still further fortified the collection by gleaning such materials from Mexico itself as had been overlooked by my illustrious predecessors in these researches. For these I am indebted to the courtesy of Count Cortina, and, yet more, to that of Don Lúcas Alaman, Minister of Foreign Affairs in Mexico; but, above all, to my excellent friend, Don Angel Calderon de la Barca, late Minister Plenipotentiary to that country from the court of Madrid,—a gentleman whose high and estimable qualities, even more than his station, secured him the public confidence, and gained him free access to every place of interest and importance in Mexico.

I have also to acknowledge the very kind offices rendered to me by the Count Camaldoli at Naples; by the Duke of Serradifalco in Sicily, a nobleman whose science gives additional lustre to his rank; and by the Duke of Monteleone, the present representative of Cortés, who has courteously opened the archives of his family to my inspection. To these names must also be added that of Sir Thomas Phillips, Bart., whose precious collection of manuscripts probably surpasses in extent that of any private gentleman in Great Britain, if not in Europe; that of M. Ternaux-Compans, the proprietor of the valuable literary collection of Don Antonio Uguina, including the papers of Muñoz, the fruits of which he is giving to the world in his excellent translations; and, lastly, that of my friend and countryman, Arthur Middleton, Esq., late Chargé-

d'Affaires from the United States at the court of Madrid, for the efficient aid he has afforded me in prosecuting my inquiries in that capital.

In addition to this stock of original documents obtained through these various sources, I have diligently provided myself with such printed works as have reference to the subject, including the magnificent publications, which have appeared both in France and England, on the Antiquities of Mexico, which, from their cost and colossal dimensions, would seem better suited to a public than to a private library.

Having thus stated the nature of my materials, and the sources whence they are derived, it remains for me to add a few observations on the general plan and composition of the work. Among the remarkable achievements of the Spaniards in the sixteenth century, there is no one more striking to the imagination than the conquest of Mexico. The subversion of a great empire by a handful of adventurers, taken with all its strange and picturesque accompaniments, has the air of romance rather than of sober history; and it is not easy to treat such a theme according to the severe rules prescribed by historical criticism. But, notwithstanding the seductions of the subject, I have conscientiously endeavored to distinguish fact from fiction, and to establish the narrative on as broad a basis as possible of contemporary evidence; and I have taken occasion to corroborate the text by ample citations from authorities, usually in the original, since few of them can be very accessible to the reader. In these extracts I have scrupulously conformed to the ancient orthography, however obsolete and even barbarous, rather than

impair in any degree the integrity of the original document.

Although the subject of the work is, properly, only the Conquest of Mexico, I have prepared the way for it by such a view of the civilization of the ancient Mexicans as might acquaint the reader with the character of this extraordinary race, and enable him to understand the difficulties which the Spaniards had to encounter in their subjugation. This Introductory part of the work, with the essay in the Appendix which properly belongs to the Introduction, although both together making only half a volume, has cost me as much labor, and nearly as much time, as the remainder of the history. If I shall have succeeded in giving the reader a just idea of the true nature and extent of the civilization to which the Mexicans had attained, it will not be labor lost.

The story of the Conquest terminates with the fall of the capital. Yet I have preferred to continue the narrative to the death of Cortés, relying on the interest which the development of his character in his military career may have excited in the reader. I am not insensible to the hazard I incur by such a course. The mind, previously occupied with one great idea, that of the subversion of the capital, may feel the prolongation of the story beyond that point superfluous, if not tedious, and may find it difficult, after the excitement caused by witnessing a great national catastrophe, to take an interest in the adventures of a private individual. Solís took the more politic course of concluding his narrative with the fall of Mexico, and thus leaves his readers with the full impression of that memorable

event, undisturbed, on their minds. To prolong the narrative is to expose the historian to the error so much censured by the French critics in some of their most celebrated dramas, where the author by a premature *dénouement* has impaired the interest of his piece. It is the defect that necessarily attaches, though in a greater degree, to the history of Columbus, in which petty adventures among a group of islands make up the sequel of a life that opened with the magnificent discovery of a World,—a defect, in short, which it has required all the genius of Irving and the magical charm of his style perfectly to overcome.

Notwithstanding these objections, I have been induced to continue the narrative, partly from deference to the opinion of several Spanish scholars, who considered that the biography of Cortés had not been fully exhibited, and partly from the circumstance of my having such a body of original materials for this biography at my command. And I cannot regret that I have adopted this course; since, whatever lustre the Conquest may reflect on Cortés as a military achievement, it gives but an imperfect idea of his enlightened spirit and of his comprehensive and versatile genius.

To the eye of the critic there may seem some incongruity in a plan which combines objects so dissimilar as those embraced by the present history, where the Introduction, occupied with the antiquities and origin of a nation, has somewhat the character of a *philosophic* theme, while the conclusion is strictly *biographical*, and the two may be supposed to match indifferently with the main body, or *historical* portion, of the work. But

I may hope that such objections will be found to have less weight in practice than in theory; and, if properly managed, that the general views of the Introduction will prepare the reader for the particulars of the Conquest, and that the great public events narrated in this will, without violence, open the way to the remaining personal history of the hero who is the soul of it. Whatever incongruity may exist in other respects, I may hope that the *unity of interest*, the only unity held of much importance by modern critics, will be found still to be preserved.

The distance of the present age from the period of the narrative might be presumed to secure the historian from undue prejudice or partiality. Yet by the American and the English reader, acknowledging so different a moral standard from that of the sixteenth century, I may possibly be thought too indulgent to the errors of the Conquerors; while by a Spaniard, accustomed to the undiluted panegyric of Solís, I may be deemed to have dealt too hardly with them. To such I can only say that, while, on the one hand, I have not hesitated to expose in their strongest colors the excesses of the Conquerors, on the other, I have given them the benefit of such mitigating reflections as might be suggested by the circumstances and the period in which they lived. I have endeavored not only to present a picture true in itself, but to place it in its proper light, and to put the spectator in a proper point of view for seeing it to the best advantage. I have endeavored, at the expense of some repetition, to surround him with the spirit of the times, and, in a word, to make him, if I may so express myself, a contemporary of the sixteenth century.

Whether, and how far, I have succeeded in this, he must determine.

For one thing, before I conclude, I may reasonably ask the reader's indulgence. Owing to the state of my eyes, I have been obliged to use a writing-case made for the blind, which does not permit the writer to see his own manuscript. Nor have I ever corrected, or even read, my own original draft. As the chirography, under these disadvantages, has been too often careless and obscure, occasional errors, even with the utmost care of my secretary, must have necessarily occurred in the transcription, somewhat increased by the barbarous phraseology imported from my Mexican authorities. I cannot expect that these errors have always been detected even by the vigilant eye of the perspicacious critic to whom the proof-sheets have been subjected.

In the Preface to the "History of Ferdinand and Isabella," I lamented that, while occupied with that subject, two of its most attractive parts had engaged the attention of the most popular of American authors, Washington Irving. By a singular chance, something like the reverse of this has taken place in the composition of the present history, and I have found myself unconsciously taking up ground which he was preparing to occupy. It was not till I had become master of my rich collection of materials that I was acquainted with this circumstance; and, had he persevered in his design, I should unhesitatingly have abandoned my own, if not from courtesy, at least from policy; for, though armed with the weapons of Achilles, this could give me no hope of success in a competition with Achilles himself. But no sooner was that distinguished writer

informed of the preparations I had made, than, with the gentlemanly spirit which will surprise no one who has the pleasure of his acquaintance, he instantly announced to me his attention of leaving the subject open to me. While I do but justice to Mr. Irving by this statement, I feel the prejudice it does to myself in the unavailing regret I am exciting in the bosom of the reader.

I must not conclude this Preface, too long protracted as it is already, without a word of acknowledgment to my friend George Ticknor, Esq.,—the friend of many years,—for his patient revision of my manuscript; a labor of love, the worth of which those only can estimate who are acquainted with his extraordinary erudition and his nice critical taste. If I have reserved his name for the last in the list of those to whose good offices I am indebted, it is most assuredly not because I value his services least.

WILLIAM H. PRESCOTT.

BOSTON, October 1, 1843.

NOTE. — The author's emendations of this history include many additional notes, which, being often contradictory to the text, have been printed between brackets. They were chiefly derived from the copious annotations of Don José F. Ramirez and Don Lúcas Alaman to the two Spanish translations published in Mexico. There could be no stronger guarantee of the value and general accuracy of the work than the minute labor bestowed upon it by these distinguished scholars.—ED.

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MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

MAPS.

THE maps for this work are the result of a laborious investigation by a skilful and competent hand. Humboldt's are the only maps of New Spain which can lay claim to the credit even of tolerable accuracy. They have been adopted as the basis of those for the present history; and an occasional deviation from them has been founded on a careful comparison with the verbal accounts of Gomara, Bernal Diaz, Clavigero, and, above all, of Cortés, illustrated by his meagre commentator, Lorenzana. Of these, Cortés is generally the most full and exact in his statement of distances, though it is to be regretted that he does not more frequently afford a hint as to the bearings of the places. As it is desirable to present the reader with a complete and unembarrassed view of the route of Cortés, the names of all other places than those which occur in this work have been discarded, while a considerable number have been now introduced which are not to be found on any previous chart. The position of these must necessarily be, in some degree, hypothetical; but, as it has been determined by a study of the narratives of contemporary historians and by the measurement of distances, the result, probably, cannot in any instance be much out of the way. The ancient names have been retained, so as to present a map of the country as it was at the time of the Conquest.

PORTRAIT PREFIXED TO VOLUME FIRST.

This engraving of Cortés was taken from a full-length portrait, presented to me by my friend Don Angel Calderon de la Barca, during his residence as minister to Mexico. It is a copy, and, as I am assured, a very faithful one, from the painting in the Hospital of Jesus. This painting is itself a copy from one taken, probably, a few years before the death of Cortés, on his last visit to Spain. What has be-

come of the original is not known. That in Mexico was sent there by one of the family of Monteleone, descendants of the Conqueror, as appears from his arms, which the painter has introduced in a corner of the picture. This seems to be regarded by the family as the best portrait of the Conqueror, and a copy, like that in my possession, has been recently made for the present Duke of Monteleone in Italy. It has never before been engraved.

PORTRAIT PREFIXED TO VOLUME SECOND.

The original portrait was said to have been painted by an artist named Maldonado, who came over to Mexico at the time of the Conquest. It belonged to the Counts of Miravalle, and, not many years since, came into the possession of Mr. Smith Wilcox, consul from the United States to Mexico. Of the authenticity of this portrait I have received opposite opinions, and these, too, from the most respectable sources in Mexico; the one representing it as undoubtedly genuine, the other regarding it as an ideal portrait, painted after the Conquest, to adorn the halls of the Counts of Miravalle, and to flatter their pride by the image of their royal progenitor. The countenance must be admitted to wear a tinge of soft and not unpleasing melancholy, quite in harmony with the fortunes of the unhappy monarch.

PORTRAIT PREFIXED TO VOLUME THIRD.

This likeness of Cortés was originally engraved for that inquisitive scholar and industrious collector, Don Antonio Uguina, of Madrid, from what he considered the best portrait of Cortés. The original is, I am informed, the same portrait which now hangs in the Museo, among the series of viceroys, at Mexico. It must have been taken at a much earlier period of life than the portrait in the Hospital of Jesus, in which both the hair and beard are somewhat grizzled with years. The expression of the countenance, of a higher and more intellectual cast than the preceding, has a quiet, contemplative air, not to have been expected in one of the stirring character of Cortés.

ARMS OF CORTÉS.

The stamp on the back of the work represents the arms granted by letters patent to Cortés by the Emperor Charles V., March 7, 1525. In the instrument it is stated that the double-headed eagle is given

as the arms of the empire; the golden lion, in memory of the courage and constancy shown by Cortés in the conquest of Mexico; the three gold crowns indicate the three monarchs whom he successively opposed in the capital of Mexico; the city represents that capital; and the seven heads held together by a chain, on the border of the shield, denote so many Indian princes whom he subdued in the Valley.

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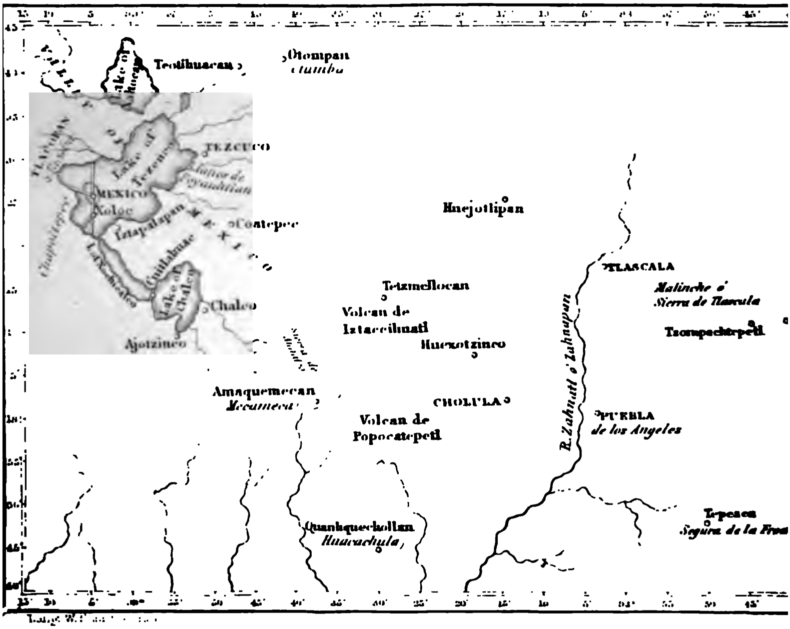
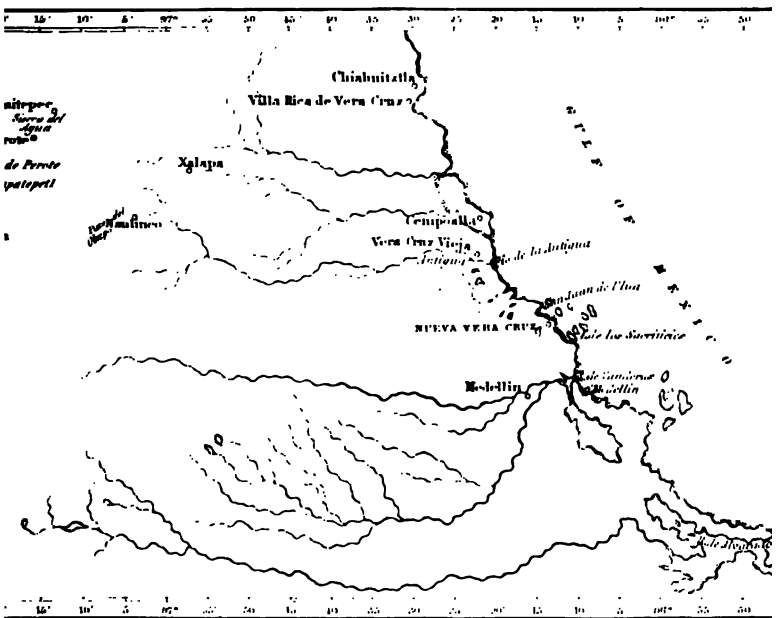
MAP OF THE COUNTRY TRAVERSED BY



FOR PRESCOTT'S HIST

DS ON THEIR MARCH TO MEXICO.



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BOOK FIRST.

INTRODUCTION.

PRELIMINARY VIEW OF THE AZTEC CIVILIZATION.

CONQUEST OF MEXICO.

BOOK I.

INTRODUCTION.

VIEW OF THE AZTEC CIVILIZATION.

CHAPTER I.

ANCIENT MEXICO.—CLIMATE AND PRODUCTS.—PRIMITIVE RACES.—AZTEC EMPIRE.

Of all that extensive empire which once acknowledged the authority of Spain in the New World, no portion, for interest and importance, can be compared with Mexico;—and this equally, whether we consider the variety of its soil and climate; the inexhaustible stores of its mineral wealth; its scenery, grand and picturesque beyond example; the character of its ancient inhabitants, not only far surpassing in intelligence that of the other North American races, but reminding us, by their monuments, of the primitive civilization of Egypt and Hindostan; or, lastly, the peculiar circumstances of its Conquest, adventurous and romantic as any legend devised by Norman or Italian bard of chivalry. It is the purpose of the present narrative to exhibit the history of this Con-

quest, and that of the remarkable man by whom it was achieved.

But, in order that the reader may have a better understanding of the subject, it will be well, before entering on it, to take a general survey of the political and social institutions of the races who occupied the land at the time of its discovery.

The country of the ancient Mexicans, or Aztecs as they were called, formed but a very small part of the extensive territories comprehended in the modern republic of Mexico.[1] Its boundaries cannot be defined with certainty. They were much enlarged in the latter days of the empire, when they may be considered as reaching from about the eighteenth degree north, to the twenty-first, on the Atlantic; and from the fourteenth to the nineteenth, including a very narrow strip, on the Pacific.[2] In its greatest breadth, it could

[1] Extensive indeed, if we may trust Archbishop Lorenzana, who tells us, "It is doubtful if the country of New Spain does not border on Tartary and Greenland;—by the way of California, on the former, and by New Mexico, on the latter"! Historia de Nueva-España (México, 1770), p. 38, nota.

[2] I have conformed to the limits fixed by Clavigero. He has, probably, examined the subject with more thoroughness and fidelity than most of his countrymen, who differ from him, and who assign a more liberal extent to the monarchy. (See his Storia antica del Messico (Cesena, 1780), dissert. 7.) The abbé, however, has not informed his readers on what frail foundations his conclusions rest. The extent of the Aztec empire is to be gathered from the writings of historians since the arrival of the Spaniards, and from the picture-rolls of tribute paid by the conquered cities; both sources extremely vague and defective. See the MSS. of the Mendoza collection, in Lord Kingsborough's magnificent publication (Antiquities of Mexico, comprising Facsimiles of Ancient Paintings and Hieroglyphics, together with the Monuments of New Spain. London, 1830). The difficulty of the

not exceed five degrees and a half, dwindling, as it approached its southeastern limits, to less than two. It covered, probably, less than sixteen thousand square leagues.[3] Yet such is the remarkable formation of this country, that, though not more than twice as large as New England, it presented every variety of climate, and was capable of yielding nearly every fruit, found between the equator and the Arctic circle.

All along the Atlantic, the country is bordered by a broad tract, called the *tierra caliente*, or hot region, which has the usual high temperature of equinoctial lands. Parched and sandy plains are intermingled with others, of exuberant fertility, almost impervious from thickets of aromatic shrubs and wild flowers, in the midst of which tower up trees of that magnificent

inquiry is much increased by the fact of the conquests having been made, as will be seen hereafter, by the united arms of three powers, so that it is not always easy to tell to which party they eventually belonged. The affair is involved in so much uncertainty that Clavigero, notwithstanding the positive assertions in his text, has not ventured, in his map, to define the precise limits of the empire, either towards the north, where it mingles with the Tezcucan empire, or towards the south, where, indeed, he has fallen into the egregious blunder of asserting that, while the Mexican territory reached to the fourteenth degree, it did not include any portion of Guatemala. (See tom. i. p. 29, and tom. iv. dissert. 7.) The Tezcucan chronicler Ixtlilxochitl puts in a sturdy claim for the paramount empire of his own nation. Historia Chichimeca, MS., cap. 39, 53, et alibi.

3 Eighteen to twenty thousand, according to Humboldt, who considers the Mexican territory to have been the same with that occupied by the modern intendancies of Mexico, Puebla, Vera Cruz, Oaxaca, and Valladolid. (Essai politique sur le Royaume de Nouvelle-Espagne (Paris, 1825), tom. i. p. 196.) This last, however, was all, or nearly all, included in the rival kingdom of Michoacán, as he himself more correctly states in another part of his work. Comp. tom. ii. p. 164.

growth which is found only within the tropics. In this wilderness of sweets lurks the fatal *malaria*, engendered, probably, by the decomposition of rank vegetable substances in a hot and humid soil. The season of the bilious fever,—*vómito*, as it is called,—which scourges these coasts, continues from the spring to the autumnal equinox, when it is checked by the cold winds that descend from Hudson's Bay. These winds in the winter season frequently freshen into tempests, and, sweeping down the Atlantic coast and the winding Gulf of Mexico, burst with the fury of a hurricane on its unprotected shores, and on the neighboring West India islands. Such are the mighty spells with which Nature has surrounded this land of enchantment, as if to guard the golden treasures locked up within its bosom. The genius and enterprise of man have proved more potent than her spells.

After passing some twenty leagues across this burning region, the traveller finds himself rising into a purer atmosphere. His limbs recover their elasticity. He breathes more freely, for his senses are not now oppressed by the sultry heats and intoxicating perfumes of the valley. The aspect of nature, too, has changed, and his eye no longer revels among the gay variety of colors with which the landscape was painted there. The vanilla, the indigo, and the flowering cacao-groves disappear as he advances. The sugar-cane and the glossy-leaved banana still accompany him; and, when he has ascended about four thousand feet, he sees in the unchanging verdure, and the rich foliage of the liquid-amber tree, that he has reached the height where clouds and mists settle, in their passage from the Mex-

ican Gulf. This is the region of perpetual humidity; but he welcomes it with pleasure, as announcing his escape from the influence of the deadly *vómito*.[4] He has entered the *tierra templada*, or temperate region, whose character resembles that of the temperate zone of the globe. The features of the scenery become grand, and even terrible. His road sweeps along the base of mighty mountains, once gleaming with volcanic fires, and still resplendent in their mantles of snow, which serve as beacons to the mariner, for many a league at sea. All around he beholds traces of their ancient combustion, as his road passes along vast tracts of lava, bristling in the innumerable fantastic forms into which the fiery torrent has been thrown by the obstacles in its career. Perhaps, at the same moment, as he casts his eye down some steep slope, or almost unfathomable ravine, on the margin of the road, he sees their depths glowing with the rich blooms and enamelled vegetation of the tropics. Such are the singular contrasts presented, at the same time, to the senses, in this picturesque region!

Still pressing upwards, the traveller mounts into other climates, favorable to other kinds of cultivation.

[4] The traveller who enters the country across the dreary sand-hills of Vera Cruz will hardly recognize the truth of the above description. He must look for it in other parts of the *tierra caliente*. Of recent tourists, no one has given a more gorgeous picture of the impressions made on his senses by these sunny regions than Latrobe, who came on shore at Tampico (Rambler in Mexico (New York, 1836), chap. 1),—a traveller, it may be added, whose descriptions of man and nature in our own country, where we can judge, are distinguished by a sobriety and fairness that entitle him to confidence in his delineation of other countries.

The yellow maize, or Indian corn, as we usually call it, has continued to follow him up from the lowest level; but he now first sees fields of wheat, and the other European grains brought into the country by the Conquerors. Mingled with them, he views the plantations of the aloe or maguey (*agave Americana*), applied to such various and important uses by the Aztecs. The oaks now acquire a sturdier growth, and the dark forests of pine announce that he has entered the *tierra fria*, or cold region,—the third and last of the great natural terraces into which the country is divided. When he has climbed to the height of between seven and eight thousand feet, the weary traveller sets his foot on the summit of the Cordillera of the Andes,—the colossal range that, after traversing South America and the Isthmus of Darien, spreads out, as it enters Mexico, into that vast sheet of table-land which maintains an elevation of more than six thousand feet, for the distance of nearly two hundred leagues, until it gradually declines in the higher latitudes of the north.[5]

Across this mountain rampart a chain of volcanic hills stretches, in a westerly direction, of still more stupendous dimensions, forming, indeed, some of the highest land on the globe. Their peaks, entering the limits of perpetual snow, diffuse a grateful coolness over the elevated plateaus below; for these last, though termed "cold," enjoy a climate the mean temperature of which is not lower than that of the central parts of

5 This long extent of country varies in elevation from 5570 to 8856 feet,—equal to the height of the passes of Mount Cenis or the Great St. Bernard. The table-land stretches still three hundred leagues farther, before it declines to a level of 2624 feet. Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. i. pp. 157, 255.

Italy.[6] The air is exceedingly dry; the soil, though naturally good, is rarely clothed with the luxuriant vegetation of the lower regions. It frequently, indeed, has a parched and barren aspect, owing partly to the greater evaporation which takes place on these lofty plains, through the diminished pressure of the atmosphere, and partly, no doubt, to the want of trees to shelter the soil from the fierce influence of the summer sun. In the time of the Aztecs, the table-land was thickly covered with larch, oak, cypress, and other forest trees, the extraordinary dimensions of some of which, remaining to the present day, show that the curse of barrenness in later times is chargeable more on man than on nature. Indeed, the early Spaniards made as indiscriminate war on the forest as did our Puritan ancestors, though with much less reason. After once conquering the country, they had no lurking ambush to fear from the submissive, semi-civilized Indian, and were not, like our forefathers, obliged to keep watch and ward for a century. This spoliation of the ground, however, is said to have been pleasing to their imaginations, as it reminded them of the plains of their own Castile,—the table-land of Europe;[7] where

[6] About 62° Fahrenheit, or 17° Réaumur. (Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. i. p. 273.) The more elevated plateaus of the table-land, as the Valley of Toluca, about 8500 feet above the sea, have a stern climate, in which the thermometer, during a great part of the day, rarely rises beyond 45° F. Idem (loc. cit.), and Malte-Brun (Universal Geography, Eng. trans., book 83), who is, indeed, in this part of his work, but an echo of the former writer.

[7] The elevation of the Castiles, according to the authority repeatedly cited, is about 350 toises, or 2100 feet above the ocean. (Humboldt's Dissertation, apud Laborde, Itinéraire descriptif de l'Espagne (Paris, 1827), tom. i. p. 5.) It is rare to find plains in Europe of so great a height.

the nakedness of the landscape forms the burden of every traveller's lament who visits that country.

Midway across the continent, somewhat nearer the Pacific than the Atlantic Ocean, at an elevation of nearly seven thousand five hundred feet, is the celebrated Valley of Mexico. It is of an oval form, about sixty-seven leagues in circumference,[8] and is encompassed by a towering rampart of porphyritic rock, which nature seems to have provided, though ineffectually, to protect it from invasion.

The soil, once carpeted with a beautiful verdure and thickly sprinkled with stately trees, is often bare, and, in many places, white with the incrustation of salts caused by the draining of the waters. Five lakes are spread over the Valley, occupying one-tenth of its surface.[9] On the opposite borders of the largest of these basins, much shrunk in its dimensions[10] since the days of the

[8] Archbishop Lorenzana estimates the circuit of the Valley at ninety leagues, correcting at the same time the statement of Cortés, which puts it at seventy, very near the truth, as appears from the result of M. de Humboldt's measurement, cited in the text. Its length is about eighteen leagues, by twelve and a half in breadth. (Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 29.—Lorenzana, Hist. de Nueva-España, p. 101.) Humboldt's map of the Valley of Mexico forms the third in his "Atlas géographique et physique," and, like all the others in the collection, will be found of inestimable value to the traveller, the geologist, and the historian.

[9] Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. pp. 29, 44–49.—Malte-Brun, book 85. This latter geographer assigns only 6700 feet for the level of the Valley, contradicting himself (comp. book 83), or rather Humboldt, to whose pages he helps himself *plenis manibus*, somewhat too liberally, indeed, for the scanty references at the bottom of his page.

[10] Torquemada accounts in part for this diminution by supposing that, as God permitted the waters, which once covered the whole earth, to subside after mankind had been nearly exterminated for their

Aztecs, stood the cities of Mexico and Tezcuco, the capitals of the two most potent and flourishing states of Anahuac, whose history, with that of the mysterious races that preceded them in the country,* exhibits

iniquities, so he allowed the waters of the Mexican lake to subside, in token of good will and reconciliation, after the idolatrous races of the land had been destroyed by the Spaniards! (Monarchía Indiana (Madrid, 1723), tom. i. p. 309.) Quite as probable, if not as orthodox, an explanation, may be found in the active evaporation of these upper regions, and in the fact of an immense drain having been constructed, during the lifetime of the good father, to reduce the waters of the principal lake and protect the capital from inundation.

---

* [It is perhaps to be regretted that, instead of a meagre notice of the Toltecs with a passing allusion to earlier races, the author did not give a separate chapter to the history of the country during the ages preceding the Conquest. That history, it is true, resting on tradition or on questionable records mingled with legendary and mythological relations, is full of obscurity and doubt. But, whatever its uncertainty in regard to details, it presents a mass of general facts supported by analogy and by the stronger evidence of language and of the existing relics of the past. The number and diversity of the architectural and other remains found on the soil of Mexico and the adjacent regions, and the immense variety of the spoken languages, with the vestiges of others that have passed out of use,—all perhaps derived originally from a common stock, but exhibiting different stages of development or decay, and capable of being classified into several distinct families,—point to conclusions that render the subject one of the most attractive fields for critical investigation. These concurrent testimonies leave no doubt that, like portions of the Old World similarly favored in regard to climate, soil, and situation, the central regions of America were occupied from a very remote period by nations which made distinct advances in civilization, and passed through a cycle of revolutions comparable to that of which the Valley of the Euphrates and other parts of Asia were anciently the scene. The useful arts were known and practised, wealth was accumulated, social systems exhibiting a certain refinement and a peculiar complexity were organized, states were established which flourished, decayed,—either from the effects of

some of the nearest approaches to civilization to be met with anciently on the North American continent.

Of these races the most conspicuous were the Toltecs. Advancing from a northerly direction, but from what region is uncertain,* they entered the territory of Ana-

isolation or an inherent incapacity for continuance,—and were finally overthrown by invaders, by whom the experiment was repeated, though not always with equal success. Some of these nations passed away, leaving no trace but their names; others, whose very names are unknown, left mysterious monuments imbedded in the soil or records that are undecipherable. Of those that still remain, comprising about a dozen distinct races speaking a hundred and twenty different dialects, we have the traditions preserved either in their own records or in those of the Spanish discoverers. The task of constructing out of these materials a history shorn of the adornments of mythology and fable has been attempted by the Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg (Histoire des Nations civilisées du Mexique et de l'Amérique-Centrale, durant les Siècles antérieurs à Christophe Colomb, 4 vols., Paris, 1857–59), and, whatever may be thought of the method he has pursued, his research is unquestionable, and his views—very different from those which he has since put forth—merit attention. A more practical effort has been made by Don Manuel Orozco y Berra to trace the order, diffusion, and relations of the various races by the differences, the intermixtures, and the geographical limits of their languages. (Geografía de las Lenguas y Carta etnográfica de México, precedidas de un Ensayo de Clasificacion de las mismas Lenguas y de Apuntes para las Inmigraciones de las Tribus, México, 1864.)—ED.]

* [The uncertainty is not diminished by our being told that Tollan, Tullan, Tulan, or Tula (called also Tlapallan and Huehuetlapallan) was the original seat of this people, since we are still left in doubt whether the country so designated—like Aztlan, the supposed point of departure of the Aztecs—is to be located in New Mexico, California, the northwestern extremity of America, or in Asia. M. Brasseur de Bourbourg (whose later speculations, in which the name plays a conspicuous part, will be noticed more appropriately in the Appendix) found in the Quiché manuscripts mention of four Tollans, one of them "in the east, on the other side of the sea." "But," he adds, "in what part of the world is it to be placed? *C'est là encore une*

huac,[11] probably before the close of the seventh century. Of course, little can be gleaned with certainty respect-

[11] Anahuac, according to Humboldt, comprehended only the country between the fourteenth and twenty-first degrees of north latitude.

question bien difficile à résoudre." (Hist. des Nations civilisées du Mexique, tom. i. pp. 167, 168.) Nor will the ētymology much help us. According to Buschmann, *Tollan* is derived from *tolin*, reed, and signifies "place of reeds,"—"Ort der Binsen, Platz mit Binsen gewachsen, *juncetum*." (Über die aztekischen Ortsnamen, S. 682.) He refers, however, to a different derivation, suggested by a writer who has made it the basis of one of those extraordinary theories which are propounded from time to time, to account for the first diffusion of the human race, and more particularly for the original settlement of America. According to this theory, the cradle of mankind was the Himalayan Mountains. "But the collective name of these lofty regions was very anciently designated by appellations the roots of which were *Tal*, *Tol*, *Tul*, meaning tall, high, . . . as it does yet in many languages, the English, Chinese, and Arabic for instance. Such were *Tolo*, *T'hala*, *Talaha*, *Tulan*, etc., in the old Sanscrit and primitive languages of Asia. Whence came the Asiatic *Atlas* and also the *Atlantes* of the Greeks, who, spreading through the world westerly, gave these names to many other places and nations. . . . The Talas or Atlantes occupied or conquered Europe and Africa, nay, went to America in very early times. . . . In Greece they became *Atalantes*, *Talautians* of Epirus, *Aetolians*. . . . They gave name to Italy, *Aitala* meaning land eminent, . . . to the Atlantic Ocean, and to the great Atlantis, or America, called in the Hindu books *Atala* or *Tala-tolo*, the fourth world, where dwelt giants or powerful men. . . . America is also filled with their names and deeds from Mexico and Carolina to Peru: the *Tol-tecas*, people of Tol, and Aztlan, *Otolum* near Palenque, many towns of *Tula* and *Tolu*; the *Talas* of Michuacan, the *Matalans*, *Atalans*, *Tulukis*, etc., of North America." (C. S. Rafinesque, Atlantic Journal, Philadelphia, 1832–33.) It need hardly be added that Tula has also been identified with the equally unknown and long-sought-for *ultima Thule*, with the simplifying effect of bringing two streams of inquiry into one channel. Meanwhile, by a different kind of criticism, the whole question is dissipated into thin air, *Tollan* and *Aztlan* being resolved into names of mere mythical

ing a people whose written records have perished, and who are known to us only through the traditionary legends of the nations that succeeded them.[12] By the

(Essai politique, tom. i. p. 197.) According to Clavigero, it included nearly all since known as New Spain. (Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 27.) Veytia uses it, also, as synonymous with New Spain. (Historia antigua de Méjico (Méjico, 1836), tom. i. cap. 12.) The first of these writers probably allows too little, as the latter do too much, for its boundaries. Ixtlilxochitl says it extended four hundred leagues south of the Otomi country. (Hist. Chichimeca, MS., cap. 73.) The word Anahuac signifies *near the water*. It was, probably, first applied to the country around the lakes in the Mexican Valley, and gradually extended to the remoter regions occupied by the Aztecs and the other semi-civilized races. Or possibly the name may have been intended, as Veytia suggests (Hist. antig., lib. 1, cap. 1), to denote the land between the waters of the Atlantic and Pacific.*

[12] Clavigero talks of Boturini's having written "on the faith of the Toltec historians." (Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 128.) But that scholar does not pretend to have ever met with a Toltec manuscript himself, and had heard of only one in the possession of Ixtlilxochitl. (See his Idea de una nueva Historia general de la América Septentrional (Madrid, 1746), p. 110.) The latter writer tells us that his account of the Toltec and Chichimec races was "derived from interpretation"

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import, and the regions thus designated transferred from the earth to the bright domain of the sky, from which the descriptions in the legends appear to have been borrowed. See Brinton, Myths of the New World, pp. 88, 89.—ED.]

* [This suggestion of Veytia is unworthy of attention,—refuted by the actual application and appropriateness of the name, and by the state of geographical knowledge and ideas at the period when it must have originated. A modern traveller, describing the appearance of the great plains as seen from the summit of Popocatepetl, remarks, "Even now that the lakes have shrunk to a fraction of their former size, we could see the fitness of the name given in old times to the Valley of Mexico, *Anahuac*, that is, By the water-side." Tylor, Anahuac: or Mexico and the Mexicans, Ancient and Modern (London 1861), p. 270.—ED.]

general agreement of these, however, the Toltecs were well instructed in agriculture and many of the most useful mechanic arts; were nice workers of metals; invented the complex arrangement of time adopted by the Aztecs; and, in short, were the true fountains of the civilization which distinguished this part of the continent in later times.[13] They established their capital at Tula, north of the Mexican Valley, and the remains of extensive buildings were to be discerned there at the time of the Conquest.[14] The noble ruins of religious and other edifices, still to be seen in various parts of New Spain, are referred to this people, whose

(probably of the Tezcucan paintings), "and from the traditions of old men;" poor authority for events which had passed centuries before. Indeed, he acknowledges that their narratives were so full of absurdity and falsehood that he was obliged to reject nine-tenths of them. (See his Relaciones, MS., no. 5.) The cause of truth would not have suffered much, probably, if he had rejected nine-tenths of the remainder.*

[13] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 2.—Idem, Relaciones, MS., no. 2.—Sahagun, Historia general de las Cosas de Nueva-España (México, 1829), lib. 10, cap. 29.—Veytia, Hist. antig., lib. 1, cap. 27.

[14] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 10, cap. 29.

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* [Ixtlilxochitl's language does not necessarily imply that he considered any of the relations he had received as false or absurd, nor does he say that he had rejected nine-tenths of them. What he has written is, he asserts, "the true history of the Toltecs," though it does not amount to nine-tenths of the whole ("de lo que ello fué"), *i.e.*, of what had been contained in the original records; these records having perished, and he himself having abridged the accounts he had been able to obtain of their contents, as well for the sake of brevity as because of the marvellous character of the relations ("son tan estrañas las cosas y tan peregrinas y nunca oidas"). The sources of his information are also incorrectly described; but a further mention of them will be found in a note at the end of this Book.—ED.]

name, *Toltec*, has passed into a synonym for *architect*.[15] Their shadowy history reminds us of those primitive races who preceded the ancient Egyptians in the march of civilization; fragments of whose monuments, as they are seen at this day, incorporated with the buildings of the Egyptians themselves, give to these latter the appearance of almost modern constructions.[16]

After a period of four centuries, the Toltecs, who had extended their sway over the remotest borders of Anahuac,[17] having been greatly reduced, it is said, by famine, pestilence, and unsuccessful wars, disappeared from the land as silently and mysteriously as they had entered it. A few of them still lingered behind, but much the greater number, probably, spread over the region of Central America and the neighboring isles; and the traveller now speculates on the majestic ruins of Mitla and Palenque, as possibly the work of this extraordinary people.[18]*

[15] Sahagun, ubi supra.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 1, cap. 14.

[16] Description de l'Égypte (Paris, 1809), Antiquités, tom. i. cap. 1. Veytia has traced the migrations of the Toltecs with sufficient industry, scarcely rewarded by the necessarily doubtful credit of the results. Hist. antig., lib. 2, cap. 21–33.

[17] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 73.

[18] Veytia, Hist. antig., lib. 1, cap. 33.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 3.—Idem, Relaciones, MS., nos. 4, 5.—Father Torquemada—perhaps misinterpreting the Tezcucan hieroglyphics—has accounted for this mysterious disappearance of the Toltecs by such *fee-faw-fum* stories of giants and demons as show his appetite for the marvellous was fully equal to that of any of his calling. See his Monarch. Ind., lib. 1, cap. 14.

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* [This supposition, neither adopted nor rejected in the text, was, as Mr. Tylor remarks, "quite tenable at the time that Prescott wrote," being founded on the statements of early writers and partially sup-

After the lapse of another hundred years, a numerous and rude tribe, called the Chichimecs, entered the deserted country from the regions of the far Northwest. They were speedily followed by other races, of higher civilization, perhaps of the same family with the Toltecs, whose language they appear to have spoken. The most noted of these were the Aztecs or Mexicans, and the Acolhuans. The latter, better known in later times by the name of Tezcucans, from their capital, Tezcuco,[19] on the eastern border of the Mexican lake,

[19] *Tezcuco* signifies "place of detention;" as several of the tribes who successively occupied Anahuac were said to have halted some time at the spot. Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 10.*

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ported by the conclusions of Mr. Stephens, who believed that the ruined cities of Oaxaca, Chiapa, Yucatan, and Guatemala dated from a comparatively recent period, and were still flourishing at the time of the Spanish Conquest; and that their inhabitants, the ancestors, as he contends, of the degenerate race that now occupies the soil, were of the same stock and spoke the same language as the Mexicans. (Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan.) But these opinions have been refuted by later investigators. Orozco y Berra, in an elaborate and satisfactory examination of the question, discusses all the evidence relating to it, compares the remains in the southern provinces with those of the Valley of Mexico, points out the essential differences in the architecture, sculpture, and inscriptions, and arrives at the conclusion that there was "no point of contact or resemblance" between the two civilizations. He considers that of the southern provinces, though of a far higher grade, as long anterior in time to the Toltec domination,—the work of a people which had passed away, under the assaults of barbarism, at a period prior to all traditions, leaving no name and no trace of their existence save those monuments which, neglected and forgotten by their successors, have become the riddle of later generations. Geografía de las Lenguas de México, pp. 122–131. See also Tylor, Anahuac, p. 189, et seq.—ED.]

* ["Über die Etymologie lässt sich nichts sicheres sagen," says Buschmann, "so zuversichtlich auch Prescott, wohl nach Ixtlilxochitl,

were peculiarly fitted, by their comparatively mild religion and manners, for receiving the tincture of civilization which could be derived from the few Toltecs that still remained in the country.* This, in their turn, they communicated to the barbarous Chichimecs, a large portion of whom became amalgamated with the new settlers as one nation.[20]

[20] The historian speaks, in one page, of the Chichimecs burrowing in caves, or, at best, in cabins of straw, and, in the next, talks gravely of their *señoras*, *infantas*, and *caballeros*.† Ibid., cap. 9, et seq.—Veytia, Hist. antig., lib. 2, cap. 1–10.—Camargo, Historia de Tlascala, MS.

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den Namen durch *place of detention* übersetzt." Uber die aztekischen Ortsnamen, S. 697.—ED.]

* [It is difficult to reconcile the two statements that the Toltecs "were the true fountains of the civilization which distinguished this part of the continent in later times," and that they "disappeared from the land as silently and mysteriously as they had entered it," leaving an interval of more than a century before the appearance of the Aztecs and the Acolhuans. If the latter received from the former the knowledge of those arts in which they speedily rivalled them, it must have been by more direct communication and transmission than can be inferred from the mention of a small fraction of the Toltec population as remaining in the country,—a fact which has itself the appearance of having been invented to meet the difficulty. Orozco y Berra compares this transitional period with that which followed the overthrow of the Roman Empire; but if in the former case there was, in his own words, "no conquest, but only an occupation, no war because no one to contend with," the analogy altogether fails. Brasseur de Bourbourg reduces the interval between the departure of the Toltecs and the arrival of the Chichimecs to a few years, and supposes that a considerable number of the former inhabitants remained scattered through the Valley. If, however, it be allowable to substitute probabilities for doubtful relations, it is an easier solution to believe that no interval occurred and that no emigration took place.—ED.]

† [The confusion arises from the fact that the name of Chichimecs, originally that of a single tribe, and subsequently of its many offshoots,

Availing themselves of the strength derived, not only from this increase of numbers, but from their own superior refinement, the Acolhuans gradually stretched their empire over the ruder tribes in the north; while their capital was filled with a numerous population, busily employed in many of the more useful and even elegant arts of a civilized community. In this palmy state, they were suddenly assaulted by a warlike neighbor, the Tepanecs, their own kindred, and inhabitants of the same valley as themselves. Their provinces were overrun, their armies beaten, their king assassinated, and the flourishing city of Tezcuco became the prize of the victor. From this abject condition the uncommon abilities of the young prince, Nezahualcoyotl, the rightful heir to the crown, backed by the efficient aid of his Mexican allies, at length redeemed the state, and opened to it a new career of prosperity, even more brilliant than the former.[21]

The Mexicans, with whom our history is principally concerned, came also, as we have seen, from the remote regions of the North,—the populous hive of nations in the New World, as it has been in the Old.* They

[21] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 9–20.—Veytia, Hist. antig., lib. 2, cap. 29–54.

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was also used, like the term *barbarians* in mediæval Italy, to designate successive hordes, of whatever race, being sometimes employed as a mark of contempt, and sometimes assumed as an honorable appellation. It is found applied to the Otomies, the Toltecs, and many other races.—ED.]

* [Some recent writers have contended that Mexico must have been peopled originally by migrations from the South. Aztec names and communities, and traces of Toltec settlements long anterior to the occupation of Anahuac by the same people, are found in several parts

arrived on the borders of Anahuac towards the beginning of the thirteenth century, some time after the occupation of the land by the kindred races. For a long time they did not establish themselves in any permanent residence, but continued shifting their quarters to different parts of the Mexican Valley, enduring all the casualties and hardships of a migratory life. On one occasion they were enslaved by a more powerful tribe; but their ferocity soon made them formidable to their masters.[22] After a series of wanderings and adventures which need not shrink from comparison

[22] These were the Colhuans, not Acolhuans, with whom Humboldt, and most writers since, have confounded them.* See his Essai politique, tom. i. p. 414; ii. p. 37.

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of Central America. The most primitive traditions, as well as the remains of the earliest civilization, belong also to the same quarter. This latter fact, however, is considered by Orozco y Berra as itself an evidence of the migrations having been from the North, the first comers having been naturally attracted southward by a warmer climate and more fertile soil, or pushed onward in this direction by successive invasions from behind. Contradictory inferences have in like manner been drawn from the existence of Aztec remains and settlements in New Mexico and Arizona. All that can be said with confidence is that neither of the opposing theories rests on a secure and sufficient basis.—ED.]

* [Humboldt, strictly speaking, has not confounded the Colhuans with the Acolhuans, but has written, in the places cited, the latter name for the former. "Letzterer Name," says Buschmann, "ist der erstere mit dem Zusatz von *atl* Wasser,—Wasser Colhuer." (Über die aztekischen Ortsnamen, S. 690.) Yet the two tribes, according to the same authority, were entirely distinct, one alone—though which, he is unable to determine—being of the Nahuatlac race. Orozco y Berra, however, makes them both of this stock, the Acolhuans being one of the main branches, the Colhuans merely the descendants of the Toltec remnant in Anahuac.—ED.]

with the most extravagant legends of the heroic ages of antiquity, they at length halted on the southwestern borders of the principal lake, in the year 1325. They there beheld, perched on the stem of a prickly pear, which shot out from the crevice of a rock that was washed by the waves, a royal eagle of extraordinary size and beauty, with a serpent in his talons, and his broad wings opened to the rising sun. They hailed the auspicious omen, announced by an oracle as indicating the site of their future city, and laid its foundations by sinking piles into the shallows; for the low marshes were half buried under water. On these they erected their light fabrics of reeds and rushes, and sought a precarious subsistence from fishing, and from the wild fowl which frequented the waters, as well as from the cultivation of such simple vegetables as they could raise on their floating gardens. The place was called Tenochtitlan, in token of its miraculous origin, though only known to Europeans by its other name of Mexico,* derived from their war-god, Mexitli.[23] The legend of its foundation is still further commemorated by the device of the eagle and the cactus, which form the arms of the modern Mexican republic. Such were

[23] Clavigero gives good reasons for preferring the etymology of Mexico above noticed, to various others. (See his Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 168, nota.) The name *Tenochtitlan* signifies *tunal* (a cactus) *on a stone*. Esplicacion de la Col. de Mendoza, apud Antiq. of Mexico, vol. iv.

* [This is not quite correct, since the form used in the letters of Cortés and other early documents is *Temixtitan*, which is explained as a corruption of Tenochtitlan. The letters *x* and *ch* are convertible, and have the same sound,—that of the English *sh*. *Mexico* is *Mexitl* with the place-designation *co*, *tl* final being dropped before an affix.—ED.]

the humble beginnings of the Venice of the Western World.[24]

The forlorn condition of the new settlers was made still worse by domestic feuds. A part of the citizens seceded from the main body, and formed a separate community on the neighboring marshes. Thus divided, it was long before they could aspire to the acquisition of territory on the main land. They gradually increased, however, in numbers, and strengthened themselves yet more by various improvements in their polity and military discipline, while they established a reputation for courage as well as cruelty in war which made their name terrible throughout the Valley. In the early part of the fifteenth century, nearly a hundred years from the foundation of the city, an event took

[24] "Datur hæc venia antiquitati," says Livy, "ut, miscendo humana divinis, primordia urbium augustiora faciat." Hist., Præf.—See, for the above paragraph, Col. de Mendoza, plate 1, apud Antiq. of Mexico, vol. i.,—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 10,—Toribio, Historia de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 8,—Veytia, Hist. antig., lib. 2, cap. 15.— Clavigero, after a laborious examination, assigns the following dates to some of the prominent events noticed in the text. No two authorities agree on them; and this is not strange, considering that Clavigero—the most inquisitive of all—does not always agree with himself. (Compare his dates for the coming of the Acolhuans; tom. i. p. 147, and tom. iv., dissert. 2:)—

	A.D.
The Toltecs arrived in Anahuac	648
They abandoned the country	1051
The Chichimecs arrived	1170
The Acolhuans arrived about	1200
The Mexicans reached Tula	1196
They founded Mexico	1325

See his dissert. 2, sec. 12. In the last date, the one of most importance, he is confirmed by the learned Veytia, who differs from him in all the others. Hist. antig., lib. 2, cap. 15.

place which created an entire revolution in the circumstances and, to some extent, in the character of the Aztecs. This was the subversion of the Tezcucan monarchy by the Tepanecs, already noticed. When the oppressive conduct of the victors had at length aroused a spirit of resistance, its prince, Nezahualcoyotl, succeeded, after incredible perils and escapes, in mustering such a force as, with the aid of the Mexicans, placed him on a level with his enemies. In two successive battles, these were defeated with great slaughter, their chief slain, and their territory, by one of those sudden reverses which characterize the wars of petty states, passed into the hands of the conquerors. It was awarded to Mexico, in return for its important services.

Then was formed that remarkable league, which, indeed, has no parallel in history. It was agreed between the states of Mexico, Tezcuco, and the neighboring little kingdom of Tlacopan, that they should mutually support each other in their wars, offensive and defensive, and that in the distribution of the spoil one-fifth should be assigned to Tlacopan, and the remainder be divided, in what proportions is uncertain, between the other powers. The Tezcucan writers claim an equal share for their nation with the Aztecs. But this does not seem to be warranted by the immense increase of territory subsequently appropriated by the latter. And we may account for any advantage conceded to them by the treaty, on the supposition that, however inferior they may have been originally, they were, at the time of making it, in a more prosperous condition than their allies, broken and dispirited by long op-

pression. What is more extraordinary than the treaty itself, however, is the fidelity with which it was maintained. During a century of uninterrupted warfare that ensued, no instance occurred where the parties quarrelled over the division of the spoil, which so often makes shipwreck of similar confederacies among civilized states.[25]

The allies for some time found sufficient occupation for their arms in their own valley; but they soon overleaped its rocky ramparts, and by the middle of the fifteenth century, under the first Montezuma, had spread down the sides of the table-land to the borders of the Gulf of Mexico. Tenochtitlan, the Aztec capital, gave evidence of the public prosperity. Its frail tenements were supplanted by solid structures of stone and lime. Its population rapidly increased. Its old feuds were healed. The citizens who had seceded were again brought under a common government with the main body, and the quarter they occupied was

[25] The loyal Tezcucan chronicler claims the supreme dignity for his own sovereign, if not the greatest share of the spoil, by this imperial compact. (Hist. Chich., cap. 32.) Torquemada, on the other hand, claims one-half of all the conquered lands for Mexico. (Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 40.) All agree in assigning only one-fifth to Tlacopan; and Veytia (Hist. antig., lib. 3, cap. 3) and Zurita (Rapport sur les différentes Classes de Chefs de la Nouvelle-Espagne, trad. de Ternaux (Paris, 1840), p. 11), both very competent critics, acquiesce in an equal division between the two principal states in the confederacy. An ode, still extant, of Nezahualcoyotl, in its Castilian version, bears testimony to the singular union of the three powers:

> "solo se acordarán en las Naciones
> lo bien que gobernáron
> las *tres Cabezas* que el Imperio honráron."
>
> Cantares del Emperador
> Nezahualcoyotl, MS.

permanently connected with the parent city; the dimensions of which, covering the same ground, were much larger than those of the modern capital of Mexico.[26]

Fortunately, the throne was filled by a succession of able princes, who knew how to profit by their enlarged resources and by the martial enthusiasm of the nation. Year after year saw them return, loaded with the spoils of conquered cities, and with throngs of devoted captives, to their capital. No state was able long to resist the accumulated strength of the confederates. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, just before the arrival of the Spaniards, the Aztec dominion reached across the continent, from the Atlantic to the Pacific; and, under the bold and bloody Ahuitzotl, its arms had been carried far over the limits already noticed as defining its permanent territory, into the farthest corners of Guatemala and Nicaragua. This extent of empire, however limited in comparison with that of many other states, is truly wonderful, considering it as the acquisition of a people whose whole population and resources had so recently been comprised within the walls of their own petty city, and considering, moreover, that the conquered territory was thickly settled by various races, bred to arms like the Mexicans, and little inferior to them in social organization. The history of the Aztecs suggests some strong points of

[26] See the plans of the ancient and modern capital, in Bullock's "Mexico," first edition. The original of the ancient map was obtained by that traveller from the collection of the unfortunate Boturini; if, as seems probable, it is the one indicated on page 13 of his Catalogue, I find no warrant for Mr. Bullock's statement that it was the one prepared for Cortés by the order of Montezuma.

resemblance to that of the ancient Romans, not only in their military successes, but in the policy which led to them.[27]

[27] Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. i. lib. 2.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., tom. i. lib. 2.—Boturini, Idea, p. 146.—Col. of Mendoza, Part 1, and Codex Telleriano-Remensis, apud Antiq. of Mexico, vols. i., vi.—Machiavelli has noticed it as one great cause of the military successes of the Romans, "that they associated themselves, in their wars, with other states, as the principal," and expresses his astonishment that a similar policy should not have been adopted by ambitious republics in later times. (See his Discorsi sopra T. Livio, lib. 2, cap. 4, apud Opere (Geneva, 1798).) This, as we have seen above, was the very course pursued by the Mexicans.

The most important contribution, of late years, to the early history of Mexico is the *Historia antigua* of the Lic. Don Mariano Veytia, published in the city of Mexico, in 1836. This scholar was born of an ancient and highly respectable family at Puebla, 1718. After finishing his academic education, he went to Spain, where he was kindly received at court. He afterwards visited several other countries of Europe, made himself acquainted with their languages, and returned home well stored with the fruits of a discriminating observation and diligent study. The rest of his life he devoted to letters; especially to the illustration of the national history and antiquities. As the executor of the unfortunate Boturini, with whom he had contracted an intimacy in Madrid, he obtained access to his valuable collection of manuscripts in Mexico, and from them, and every other source which his position in society and his eminent character opened to him, he composed various works, none of which, however, except the one before us, has been admitted to the honors of the press. The time of his death is not given by his editor, but it was probably not later than 1780.

Veytia's history covers the whole period from the first occupation of Anahuac to the middle of the fifteenth century, at which point his labors were unfortunately terminated by his death. In the early portion he has endeavored to trace the migratory movements and historical annals of the principal races who entered the country. Every page bears testimony to the extent and fidelity of his researches; and, if we

feel but moderate confidence in the results, the fault is not imputable to him, so much as to the dark and doubtful nature of the subject. As he descends to later ages, he is more occupied with the fortunes of the Tezcucan than with those of the Aztec dynasty, which have been amply discussed by others of his countrymen. The premature close of his labors prevented him, probably, from giving that attention to the domestic institutions of the people he describes, to which they are entitled as the most important subject of inquiry to the historian. The deficiency has been supplied by his judicious editor, Orteaga, from other sources. In the early part of his work, Veytia has explained the chronological system of the Aztecs, but, like most writers preceding the accurate Gama, with indifferent success. As a critic, he certainly ranks much higher than the annalists who preceded him, and, when his own religion is not involved, shows a discriminating judgment. When it is, he betrays a full measure of the credulity which still maintains its hold on too many even of the well-informed of his countrymen. The editor of the work has given a very interesting letter from the Abbé Clavigero to Veytia, written when the former was a poor and humble exile, and in the tone of one addressing a person of high standing and literary eminence. Both were employed on the same subject. The writings of the poor abbé, published again and again, and translated into various languages, have spread his fame throughout Europe; while the name of Veytia, whose works have been locked up in their primitive manuscript, is scarcely known beyond the boundaries of Mexico.

CHAPTER II.

SUCCESSION TO THE CROWN.—AZTEC NOBILITY.—JUDICIAL SYSTEM.—LAWS AND REVENUES.—MILITARY INSTITUTIONS.

THE form of government differed in the different states of Anahuac. With the Aztecs and Tezcucans it was monarchical and nearly absolute. The two nations resembled each other so much in their political institutions that one of their historians has remarked, in too unqualified a manner indeed, that what is told of one may be always understood as applying to the other.[1] I shall direct my inquiries to the Mexican polity, borrowing an illustration occasionally from that of the rival kingdom.

The government was an elective monarchy. Four of the principal nobles, who had been chosen by their own body in the preceding reign, filled the office of electors, to whom were added, with merely an honorary rank, however, the two royal allies of Tezcuco and Tlacopan. The sovereign was selected from the brothers of the deceased prince, or, in default of them, from his nephews. Thus the election was always restricted to the same family. The candidate preferred must have distinguished himself in war, though, as in the case of the last Montezuma, he were a member of the priesthood.[2] This singular mode of supplying the throne

[1] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 36.

[2] This was an exception.—In Egypt, also, the king was frequently

had some advantages. The candidates received an education which fitted them for the royal dignity, while the age at which they were chosen not only secured the nation against the evils of minority, but afforded ample means for estimating their qualifications for the office. The result, at all events, was favorable; since the throne, as already noticed, was filled by a succession of able princes, well qualified to rule over a warlike and ambitious people. The scheme of election, however defective, argues a more refined and calculating policy than was to have been expected from a barbarous nation.[3]

The new monarch was installed in his regal dignity with much parade of religious ceremony, but not until, by a victorious campaign, he had obtained a sufficient number of captives to grace his triumphal entry into the capital and to furnish victims for the dark and bloody rites which stained the Aztec superstition. Amidst this pomp of human sacrifice he was crowned. The crown, resembling a mitre in its form, and curiously ornamented with gold, gems, and feathers, was placed on his head by the lord of Tezcuco, the most powerful of his royal allies. The title of *King*, by which the

taken from the warrior caste, though obliged afterwards to be instructed in the mysteries of the priesthood: *ὁ δὲ ἐκ μαχίμων ἀποδεδειγμένος εὐθὺς ἐγίνετο τῶν ἱέρων.* Plutarch, de Isid. et Osir., sec. 9.

3 Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 18; lib. 11, cap. 27.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 112.—Acosta, Naturall and Morall Historie of the East and West Indies, Eng. trans. (London, 1604).—According to Zurita, an election by the nobles took place only in default of heirs of the deceased monarch. (Rapport, p. 15.) The minute historical investigation of Clavigero may be permitted to outweigh this general assertion.

earlier Aztec princes are distinguished by Spanish writers, is supplanted by that of *Emperor* in the later reigns, intimating, perhaps, his superiority over the confederated monarchies of Tlacopan and Tezcuco.[4]

The Aztec princes, especially towards the close of the dynasty, lived in a barbaric pomp, truly Oriental. Their spacious palaces were provided with halls for the different councils who aided the monarch in the transaction of business. The chief of these was a sort of privy council, composed in part, probably, of the four electors chosen by the nobles after the accession, whose places, when made vacant by death, were immediately supplied as before. It was the business of this body, so far as can be gathered from the very loose accounts given of it, to advise the king, in respect to the government of the provinces, the administration of the revenues, and, indeed, on all great matters of public interest.[5]

In the royal buildings were accommodations, also, for a numerous body-guard of the sovereign, made up of the chief nobility. It is not easy to determine with precision, in these barbarian governments, the limits of the several orders. It is certain there was a distinct class of nobles, with large landed possessions, who held the most important offices near the person of the prince,

[4] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 6, cap. 9, 10, 14; lib. 8, cap. 31, 34.—See, also, Zurita, Rapport, pp. 20–23.—Ixtlilxochitl stoutly claims this supremacy for his own nation. (Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 34.) His assertions are at variance with facts stated by himself elsewhere, and are not countenanced by any other writer whom I have consulted.

[5] Sahagun, who places the elective power in a much larger body, speaks of four senators, who formed a state council. (Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 8, cap. 30.) Acosta enlarges the council beyond the number of the electors. (Lib. 6, ch. 26.) No two writers agree.

and engrossed the administration of the provinces and cities.[6] Many of these could trace their descent from the founders of the Aztec monarchy. According to some writers of authority, there were thirty great *caciques*, who had their residence, at least a part of the year, in the capital, and who could muster a hundred thousand vassals each on their estates.[7] Without relying on such wild statements, it is clear, from the testimony of the Conquerors, that the country was occupied by numerous powerful chieftains, who lived like independent princes on their domains. If it be true that the kings encouraged, or, indeed, exacted, the residence of these nobles in the capital, and required hostages in their absence, it is evident that their power must have been very formidable.[8]

Their estates appear to have been held by various tenures, and to have been subject to different restrictions. Some of them, earned by their own good swords or received as the recompense of public services, were held without any limitation, except that the possessors

[6] Zurita enumerates four orders of chiefs, all of whom were exempted from imposts and enjoyed very considerable privileges. He does not discriminate the several ranks with much precision. Rapport, p. 47, et seq.

[7] See, in particular, Herrera, Historia general de los Hechos de los Castellanos en las Islas y Tierra firme del Mar Océano (Madrid, 1730), dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 12.

[8] Carta de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, Hist. de Nueva-España, p. 110.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 89; lib. 14, cap. 6.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 121.—Zurita, Rapport, pp. 48, 65.—Ixtlilxochitl (Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 34) speaks of thirty great feudal chiefs, some of them Tezcucan and Tlacopan, whom he styles "grandees of the empire"! He says nothing of the great *tail* of 100,000 vassals to each, mentioned by Torquemada and Herrera.

could not dispose of them to a plebeian.[9] Others were entailed on the eldest male issue, and, in default of such, reverted to the crown. Most of them seem to have been burdened with the obligation of military service. The principal chiefs of Tezcuco, according to its chronicler, were expressly obliged to support their prince with their armed vassals, to attend his court, and aid him in the council. Some, instead of these services, were to provide for the repairs of his buildings, and to keep the royal demesnes in order, with an annual offering, by way of homage, of fruits and flowers. It was usual, if we are to believe historians, for a new king, on his accession, to confirm the investiture of estates derived from the crown.[10]

It cannot be denied that we recognize, in all this, several features of the feudal system, which, no doubt, lose nothing of their effect under the hands of the Spanish writers, who are fond of tracing analogies to European institutions. But such analogies lead sometimes to very erroneous conclusions. The obligation of military service, for instance, the most essential principle of a fief, seems to be naturally demanded by

9 *Macehual*,—a word equivalent to the French word *roturier*. Nor could fiefs originally be held by plebeians in France. See Hallam's Middle Ages (London, 1819), vol. ii. p. 207.

10 Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., ubi supra.—Zurita, Rapport, ubi supra.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. pp. 122–124.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 14, cap. 7.—Gomara, Crónica de Nueva-España, cap. 199, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.—Boturini (Idea, p. 165) carries back the origin of *fiefs* in Anahuac to the twelfth century. Carli says, "Le système politique y étoit féodal." In the next page he tells us, "Personal merit alone made the distinction of the nobility"! (Lettres Américaines, trad. Fr. (Paris, 1788), tom. i. let. 11.) Carli was a writer of a lively imagination.

every government from its subjects. As to minor points of resemblance, they fall far short of that harmonious system of reciprocal service and protection which embraced, in nice gradation, every order of a feudal monarchy. The kingdoms of Anahuac were in their nature despotic, attended, indeed, with many mitigating circumstances unknown to the despotisms of the East; but it is chimerical to look for much in common —beyond a few accidental forms and ceremonies— with those aristocratic institutions of the Middle Ages which made the court of every petty baron the precise image in miniature of that of his sovereign.

The legislative power, both in Mexico and Tezcuco, resided wholly with the monarch. This feature of despotism, however, was in some measure counteracted by the constitution of the judicial tribunals,—of more importance, among a rude people, than the legislative, since it is easier to make good laws for such a community than to enforce them, and the best laws, badly administered, are but a mockery. Over each of the principal cities, with its dependent territories, was placed a supreme judge, appointed by the crown, with original and final jurisdiction in both civil and criminal cases. There was no appeal from his sentence to any other tribunal, nor even to the king. He held his office during life; and any one who usurped his ensigns was punished with death.[11]

[11] This magistrate, who was called *cihuacoatl*,* was also to audit the

* [This word, a compound of *cihuatl*, woman, and *coatl*, serpent, was the name of a divinity, the mythical mother of the human species. Its typical application may have had reference to justice, or law, as the source of social order.—ED.]

Below this magistrate was a court, established in each province, and consisting of three members. It held concurrent jurisdiction with the supreme judge in civil suits, but in criminal an appeal lay to his tribunal. Besides these courts, there was a body of inferior magistrates, distributed through the country, chosen by the people themselves in their several districts. Their authority was limited to smaller causes, while the more important were carried up to the higher courts. There was still another class of subordinate officers, appointed also by the people, each of whom was to watch over the conduct of a certain number of families and report any disorder or breach of the laws to the higher authorities.[12]

In Tezcuco the judicial arrangements were of a more refined character;[13] and a gradation of tribunals finally terminated in a general meeting or parliament,

accounts of the collectors of the taxes in his district. (Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 127.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 11, cap. 25.) The Mendoza Collection contains a painting of the courts of justice under Montezuma, who introduced great changes in them. (Antiq. of Mexico, vol. i., Plate 70.) According to the interpreter, an appeal lay from them, in certain cases, to the king's council. Ibid., vol. vi. p. 79.

[12] Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. pp. 127, 128.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., ubi supra.—In this arrangement of the more humble magistrates we are reminded of the Anglo-Saxon hundreds and tithings, especially the latter, the members of which were to watch over the conduct of the families in their districts and bring the offenders to justice. The hard penalty of mutual responsibility was not known to the Mexicans.

[13] Zurita, so temperate, usually, in his language, remarks that, in the capital, "Tribunals were instituted which might compare in their organization with the royal audiences of Castile." (Rapport, p. 93.) His observations are chiefly drawn from the Tezcucan courts, which in their forms of procedure, he says, were like the Aztec. (Loc. cit.)

consisting of all the judges, great and petty, throughout the kingdom, held every eighty days in the capital, over which the king presided in person. This body determined all suits which, from their importance or difficulty, had been reserved for its consideration by the lower tribunals. It served, moreover, as a council of state, to assist the monarch in the transaction of public business.[14]

Such are the vague and imperfect notices that can be gleaned, respecting the Aztec tribunals, from the hieroglyphical paintings still preserved, and from the most accredited Spanish writers. These, being usually ecclesiastics, have taken much less interest in this subject than in matters connected with religion. They find some apology, certainly, in the early destruction of most of the Indian paintings, from which their information was, in part, to be gathered.

On the whole, however, it must be inferred that the Aztecs were sufficiently civilized to evince a solicitude for the rights both of property and of persons. The law, authorizing an appeal to the highest judicature in criminal matters only, shows an attention to personal security, rendered the more obligatory by the extreme severity of their penal code, which would naturally have made them more cautious of a wrong

[14] Boturini, Idea, p. 87.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 11, cap. 26.—Zurita compares this body to the Castilian cŏrtes. It would seem, however, according to him, to have consisted only of twelve principal judges, besides the king. His meaning is somewhat doubtful. (Rapport, pp. 94, 101, 106.) M. de Humboldt, in his account of the Aztec courts, has confounded them with the Tezcucan. Comp. Vues des Cordillères et Monumens des Peuples indigènes de l'Amérique (Paris, 1810), p. 55, and Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. pp. 128, 129.

conviction. The existence of a number of co-ordinate tribunals, without a central one of supreme authority to control the whole, must have given rise to very discordant interpretations of the law in different districts. But this is an evil which they shared in common with most of the nations of Europe.

The provision for making the superior judges wholly independent of the crown was worthy of an enlightened people. It presented the strongest barrier that a mere constitution could afford against tyranny. It is not, indeed, to be supposed that, in a government otherwise so despotic, means could not be found for influencing the magistrate. But it was a great step to fence round his authority with the sanction of the law; and no one of the Aztec monarchs, so far as I know, is accused of an attempt to violate it.

To receive presents or a bribe, to be guilty of collusion in any way with a suitor, was punished, in a judge, with death. Who, or what tribunal, decided as to his guilt, does not appear. In Tezcuco this was done by the rest of the court. But the king presided over that body. The Tezcucan prince Nezahualpilli, who rarely tempered justice with mercy, put one judge to death for taking a bribe, and another for determining suits in his own house,—a capital offence, also, by law.[15]

The judges of the higher tribunals were maintained from the produce of a part of the crown lands, reserved for this purpose. They, as well as the supreme judge,

[15] "If this should be done now, what an excellent thing it would be!" exclaims Sahagun's Mexican editor. Hist. de Nueva-España, tom. ii. p. 304, nota.—Zurita, Rapport, p. 102.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., ubi supra.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 67.

held their offices for life. The proceedings in the courts were conducted with decency and order. The judges wore an appropriate dress, and attended to business both parts of the day, dining always, for the sake of despatch, in an apartment of the same building where they held their session; a method of proceeding much commended by the Spanish chroniclers, to whom despatch was not very familiar in their own tribunals. Officers attended to preserve order, and others summoned the parties and produced them in court. No counsel was employed; the parties stated their own case and supported it by their witnesses. The oath of the accused was also admitted in evidence. The statement of the case, the testimony, and the proceedings of the trial were all set forth by a clerk, in hieroglyphical paintings, and handed over to the court. The paintings were executed with so much accuracy that in all suits respecting real property they were allowed to be produced as good authority in the Spanish tribunals, very long after the Conquest; and a chair for their study and interpretation was established at Mexico in 1553, which has long since shared the fate of most other provisions for learning in that unfortunate country.[16]

A capital sentence was indicated by a line traced with an arrow across the portrait of the accused. In Tezcuco, where the king presided in the court, this, according to the national chronicler, was done with

[16] Zurita, Rapport, pp. 95, 100, 103.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, loc. cit.—Humboldt, Vues des Cordillères, pp. 55, 56.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 11, cap. 25.—Clavigero says the accused might free himself by oath: "il reo poteva purgarsi col giuramento." (Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 129.) What rogue, then, could ever have been convicted?

extraordinary parade. His description, which is of rather a poetical cast, I give in his own words. "In the royal palace of Tezcuco was a court-yard, on the opposite sides of which were two halls of justice. In the principal one, called the 'tribunal of God,' was a throne of pure gold, inlaid with turquoises and other precious stones. On a stool in front was placed a human skull, crowned with an immense emerald of a pyramidal form, and surmounted by an aigrette of brilliant plumes and precious stones. The skull was laid on a heap of military weapons, shields, quivers, bows, and arrows. The walls were hung with tapestry, made of the hair of different wild animals, of rich and various colors, festooned by gold rings and embroidered with figures of birds and flowers. Above the throne was a canopy of variegated plumage, from the centre of which shot forth resplendent rays of gold and jewels. The other tribunal, called 'the King's,' was also surmounted by a gorgeous canopy of feathers, on which were emblazoned the royal arms. Here the sovereign gave public audience and communicated his despatches. But when he decided important causes, or confirmed a capital sentence, he passed to the 'tribunal of God,' attended by the fourteen great lords of the realm, marshalled according to their rank. Then, putting on his mitred crown, incrusted with precious stones, and holding a golden arrow, by way of sceptre, in his left hand, he laid his right upon the skull, and pronounced judgment."[17] All this looks rather fine for a court of justice, it must be owned. But it is certain

[17] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 36.—These various objects had a symbolical meaning, according to Boturini, Idea, p. 84.

that the Tezcucans, as we shall see hereafter, possessed both the materials and the skill requisite to work them up in this manner. Had they been a little further advanced in refinement, one might well doubt their having the bad taste to do so.

The laws of the Aztecs were registered, and exhibited to the people, in their hieroglyphical paintings. Much the larger part of them, as in every nation imperfectly civilized, relates rather to the security of persons than of property. The great crimes against society were all made capital. Even the murder of a slave was punished with death. Adulterers, as among the Jews, were stoned to death. Thieving, according to the degree of the offence, was punished by slavery or death. Yet the Mexicans could have been under no great apprehension of this crime, since the entrances to their dwellings were not secured by bolts or fastenings of any kind. It was a capital offence to remove the boundaries of another's lands; to alter the established measures; and for a guardian not to be able to give a good account of his ward's property. These regulations evince a regard for equity in dealings, and for private rights, which argues a considerable progress in civilization. Prodigals, who squandered their patrimony, were punished in like manner; a severe sentence, since the crime brought its adequate punishment along with it. Intemperance, which was the burden, moreover, of their religious homilies, was visited with the severest penalties; as if they had foreseen in it the consuming canker of their own as well as of the other Indian races in later times. It was punished in the young with death, and in older persons with loss of

rank and confiscation of property. Yet a decent conviviality was not meant to be proscribed at their festivals, and they possessed the means of indulging it, in a mild fermented liquor, called *pulque*, which is still popular, not only with the Indian, but the European population of the country.[18]

The rites of marriage were celebrated with as much formality as in any Christian country; and the institution was held in such reverence that a tribunal was instituted for the sole purpose of determining questions relating to it. Divorces could not be obtained until authorized by a sentence of this court, after a patient hearing of the parties.

But the most remarkable part of the Aztec code was that relating to slavery. There were several descriptions of slaves: prisoners taken in war, who were almost always reserved for the dreadful doom of sacrifice; criminals, public debtors, persons who, from extreme poverty, voluntarily resigned their freedom, and children who were sold by their own parents. In the last instance, usually occasioned also by poverty, it was

[18] Paintings of the Mendoza Collection, Pl. 72, and Interpretation, ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi. p. 87.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 12, cap. 7.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. pp. 130–134.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—They could scarcely have been an intemperate people, with these heavy penalties hanging over them. Indeed, Zurita bears testimony that those Spaniards who thought they were greatly erred. (Rapport, p. 112.) M. Ternaux's translation of a passage of the Anonymous Conqueror, "aucun peuple n'est aussi sobre" (Recueil de Pièces relatives à la Conquête du Mexique, ap. Voyages, etc. (Paris, 1838), p. 54), may give a more favorable impression, however, than that intended by his original, whose remark is confined to abstemiousness in eating. See the Relatione, ap. Ramusio, Raccolta delle Navigationi et Viaggi (Venetia, 1554–1565).

common for the parents, with the master's consent, to substitute others of their children successively, as they grew up; thus distributing the burden as equally as possible among the different members of the family. The willingness of freemen to incur the penalties of this condition is explained by the mild form in which it existed. The contract of sale was executed in the presence of at least four witnesses. The services to be exacted were limited with great precision. The slave was allowed to have his own family, to hold property, and even other slaves. His children were free. No one could be born to slavery in Mexico;[19] an honorable distinction, not known, I believe, in any civilized community where slavery has been sanctioned.[20] Slaves were not sold by their masters, unless when these were driven to it by poverty. They were often liberated by them at their death, and sometimes, as there was no natural repugnance founded on difference of blood and race, were married to them. Yet a refractory or vicious slave might be led into the market, with a collar round his neck, which intimated his bad character, and there be publicly sold, and, on a second sale, reserved for sacrifice.[21]

[19] In ancient Egypt the child of a slave was born free, if the father were free. (Diodorus, Bibl. Hist., lib. 1, sec. 80.) This, though more liberal than the code of most countries, fell short of the Mexican.

[20] In Egypt the same penalty was attached to the murder of a slave as to that of a freeman. (Ibid., lib. 1, sec. 77.) Robertson speaks of a class of slaves held so cheap in the eye of the Mexican law that one might kill them with impunity. (History of America (ed. London, 1776), vol. iii. p. 164.) This, however, was not in Mexico, but in Nicaragua (see his own authority, Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 3, lib. 4, cap. 2), a distant country, not incorporated in the Mexican empire, and with laws and institutions very different from those of the latter.

[21] Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 12, cap. 15; lib. 14, cap. 16, 17.

Such are some of the most striking features of the Aztec code, to which the Tezcucan bore great resemblance.[22] With some exceptions, it is stamped with the severity, the ferocity indeed, of a rude people, hardened by familiarity with scenes of blood, and relying on physical instead of moral means for the correction of evil.[23] Still, it evinces a profound respect for the great principles of morality, and as clear a perception of these principles as is to be found in the most cultivated nations.

The royal revenues were derived from various sources. The crown lands, which appear to have been extensive, made their returns in kind. The places in the neighborhood of the capital were bound to supply workmen and materials for building the king's palaces and keeping them in repair. They were also to furnish fuel, provisions, and whatever was necessary for his ordinary domestic expenditure, which was certainly on no stinted scale.[24] The principal cities, which had

—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 8, cap. 14.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. pp. 134–136.

[22] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 38, and Relaciones, MS.—The Tezcucan code, indeed, as digested under the great Nezahualcoyotl, formed the basis of the Mexican, in the latter days of the empire. Zurita, Rapport, p. 95.

[23] In this, at least, they did not resemble the Romans; of whom their countryman could boast, "Gloriari licet, nulli gentium mitiores placuisse pœnas." Livy, Hist., lib. 1, cap. 28.

[24] The Tezcucan revenues were, in like manner, paid in the produce of the country. The various branches of the royal expenditure were defrayed by specified towns and districts; and the whole arrangements here, and in Mexico, bore a remarkable resemblance to the financial regulations of the Persian empire, as reported by the Greek writers (see Herodotus, Clio, sec. 192); with this difference, however, that the towns of Persia proper were not burdened with tributes, like the conquered cities. Idem, Thalia, sec. 97.

numerous villages and a large territory dependent on them, were distributed into districts, with each a share of the lands allotted to it, for its support. The inhabitants paid a stipulated part of the produce to the crown. The vassals of the great chiefs, also, paid a portion of their earnings into the public treasury; an arrangement not at all in the spirit of the feudal institutions.[25]

In addition to this tax on all the agricultural produce of the kingdom, there was another on its manufactures. The nature and the variety of the tributes will be best shown by an enumeration of some of the principal articles. These were cotton dresses, and mantles of feather-work exquisitely made; ornamented armor; vases and plates of gold; gold dust, bands and bracelets; crystal, gilt, and varnished jars and goblets; bells, arms, and utensils of copper; reams of paper; grain, fruits, copal, amber, cochineal, cacao, wild animals and birds, timber, lime, mats, etc.[26] In this

[25] Lorenzana, Hist. de Nueva-España, p. 172.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 89; lib. 14, cap. 7.—Boturini, Idea, p. 166.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 13.—The people of the provinces were distributed into *calpulli*, or tribes, who held the lands of the neighborhood in common. Officers of their own appointment parcelled out these lands among the several families of the *calpulli;* and on the extinction or removal of a family its lands reverted to the common stock, to be again distributed. The individual proprietor had no power to alienate them. The laws regulating these matters were very precise, and had existed ever since the occupation of the country by the Aztecs. Zurita, Rapport, pp. 51–62.

[26] The following items of the tribute furnished by different cities will give a more precise idea of its nature:—20 chests of ground chocolate; 40 pieces of armor, of a particular device; 2400 loads of large mantles, of twisted cloth; 800 loads of small mantles, of rich wearing-apparel; 5 pieces of armor, of rich feathers; 60 pieces of armor, of common feathers; a chest of beans; a chest of *chian;* a chest of maize; 8000

curious medley of the most homely commodities and the elegant superfluities of luxury, it is singular that no mention should be made of silver, the great staple of the country in later times, and the use of which was certainly known to the Aztecs.[27]

Garrisons were established in the larger cities,—probably those at a distance and recently conquered,—to keep down revolt, and to enforce the payment of the tribute.[28] Tax-gatherers were also distributed through-

reams of paper; likewise 2000 loaves of very white salt, refined in the shape of a mould, for the consumption only of the lords of Mexico; 8000 lumps of unrefined copal; 400 small baskets of white refined copal; 100 copper axes; 80 loads of red chocolate; 800 *xícaras*, out of which they drank chocolate; a little vessel of small turquoise stones; 4 chests of timber, full of maize; 4000 loads of lime; tiles of gold, of the size of an oyster, and as thick as the finger; 40 bags of cochineal; 20 bags of gold dust, of the finest quality; a diadem of gold, of a specified pattern; 20 lip-jewels of clear amber, ornamented with gold; 200 loads of chocolate; 100 pots or jars of liquid-amber; 8000 *handfuls* of rich scarlet feathers; 40 tiger-skins; 1600 bundles of cotton, etc. etc. Col. de Mendoza, part 2, ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vols. i., vi.

[27] Mapa de Tributos, ap. Lorenzana, Hist. de Nueva-España.—Tribute-roll, ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. i., and Interpretation, vol. vi., pp. 17–44.—The Mendoza Collection, in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, contains a roll of the cities of the Mexican empire, with the specific tributes exacted from them. It is a copy made after the Conquest, with a pen, on European paper. (See Foreign Quarterly Review, No. XVII. Art. 4.) An original painting of the same roll was in Boturini's museum. Lorenzana has given us engravings of it, in which the outlines of the Oxford copy are filled up, though somewhat rudely. Clavigero considers the explanations in Lorenzana's edition very inaccurate (Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 25), a judgment confirmed by Aglio, who has transcribed the entire collection of the Mendoza papers, in the first volume of the Antiquities of Mexico. It would have much facilitated reference to his plates if they had been numbered;—a strange omission!

[28] The caciques, who submitted to the allied arms, were usually con-

out the kingdom, who were recognized by their official badges, and dreaded from the merciless rigor of their exactions. By a stern law, every defaulter was liable to be taken and sold as a slave. In the capital were spacious granaries and warehouses for the reception of the tributes. A receiver-general was quartered in the palace, who rendered in an exact account of the various contributions, and watched over the conduct of the inferior agents, in whom the least malversation was summarily punished. This functionary was furnished with a map of the whole empire, with a minute specification of the imposts assessed on every part of it. These imposts, moderate under the reigns of the early princes, became so burdensome under those at the close of the dynasty, being rendered still more oppressive by the manner of collection, that they bred disaffection throughout the land, and prepared the way for its conquest by the Spaniards.[29]

Communication was maintained with the remotest parts of the country by means of couriers. Post-houses were established on the great roads, about two leagues distant from each other. The courier, bearing his despatches in the form of a hieroglyphical painting, ran with them to the first station, where they were taken by another messenger and carried forward to the

firmed in their authority, and the conquered places allowed to retain their laws and usages. (Zurita, Rapport, p. 67.) The conquests were not always partitioned, but sometimes, singularly enough, were held in common by the three powers. Ibid., p. 11.

[29] Col. of Mendoza, ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi. p. 17.—Carta de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, Hist. de Nueva-España, p. 110.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 14, cap. 6, 8.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 13.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 8, cap. 18, 19.

next, and so on till they reached the capital. These couriers, trained from childhood, travelled with incredible swiftness,—not four or five leagues an hour, as an old chronicler would make us believe, but with such speed that despatches were carried from one to two hundred miles a day.[30] Fresh fish was frequently served at Montezuma's table in twenty-four hours from the time it had been taken in the Gulf of Mexico, two hundred miles from the capital. In this way intelligence of the movements of the royal armies was rapidly brought to court; and the dress of the courier, denoting by its color the nature of his tidings, spread joy or consternation in the towns through which he passed.[31]

[30] The Hon. C. A. Murray, whose imperturbable good humor under real troubles forms a contrast, rather striking, to the sensitiveness of some of his predecessors to imaginary ones, tell us, among other marvels, that an Indian of his party travelled a hundred miles in four-and-twenty hours. (Travels in North America (New York, 1839), vol. i. p. 193.) The Greek who, according to Plutarch, brought the news of victory to Platæa, a hundred and twenty-five miles, in a day, was a better traveller still. Some interesting facts on the pedestrian capabilities of man in the savage state are collected by Buffon, who concludes, truly enough, "L'homme civilisé ne connaît pas ses forces." (Histoire naturelle: De la Jeunesse.)

[31] Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 14, cap. 1.—The same wants led to the same expedients in ancient Rome, and still more ancient Persia. "Nothing in the world is borne so swiftly," says Herodotus, "as messages by the Persian couriers;" which his commentator Valckenaer prudently qualifies by the exception of the carrier-pigeon. (Herodotus, Hist., Urania, sec. 98, nec non Adnot. ed. Schweighäuser.) Couriers are noticed, in the thirteenth century, in China, by Marco Polo. Their stations were only three miles apart, and they accomplished five days' journey in one. (Viaggi di Marco Polo, lib. 2, cap. 20, ap. Ramusio, tom. ii.) A similar arrangement for posts subsists there at the present day, and excites the admiration of a modern traveller. (Anderson, British Embassy to China (London,

But the great aim of the Aztec institutions, to which private discipline and public honors were alike directed, was the profession of arms. In Mexico, as in Egypt, the soldier shared with the priest the highest consideration. The king, as we have seen, must be an experienced warrior. The tutelary deity of the Aztecs was the god of war. A great object of their military expeditions was to gather hecatombs of captives for his altars. The soldier who fell in battle was transported at once to the region of ineffable bliss in the bright mansions of the Sun.[32] Every war, therefore, became a crusade; and the warrior, animated by a religious enthusiasm like that of the early Saracen or the Christian crusader, was not only raised to a contempt of danger, but courted it, for the imperishable crown of martyrdom. Thus we find the same impulse acting in the most opposite quarters of the globe, and the Asiatic, the European, and the American, each earnestly invoking the holy name of religion in the perpetration of human butchery.

The question of war was discussed in a council of the king and his chief nobles. Ambassadors were sent, previously to its declaration, to require the hostile state to receive the Mexican gods and to pay the customary tribute. The persons of ambassadors were held sacred throughout Anahuac. They were lodged and entertained in the great towns at the public charge, and were everywhere received with courtesy, so long as they did not deviate from the high-roads on their route. When they did, they forfeited their privileges. If the em-

1796), p. 282.) In all these cases, the posts were for the use of government only.

[32] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 3, Apend., cap. 3.

bassy proved unsuccessful, a defiance, or open declaration of war, was sent; quotas were drawn from the conquered provinces, which were always subjected to military service, as well as the payment of taxes; and the royal army, usually with the monarch at its head, began its march.[33]

The Aztec princes made use of the incentives employed by European monarchs to excite the ambition of their followers. They established various military orders, each having its privileges and peculiar insignia. There seems, also, to have existed a sort of knighthood, of inferior degree. It was the cheapest reward of martial prowess, and whoever had not reached it was excluded from using ornaments on his arms or his person, and obliged to wear a coarse white stuff, made from the threads of the aloe, called *nequen*. Even the members of the royal family were not excepted from this law, which reminds one of the occasional practice of Christian knights, to wear plain armor, or shields without device, till they had achieved some doughty feat of chivalry. Although the military orders were thrown open to all, it is probable that they were chiefly filled with persons of rank, who, by their previous training and connections, were able to come into the field under peculiar advantages.[34]

[33] Zurita, Rapport, pp. 68, 120.— Col. of Mendoza, ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. i. Pl. 67; vol. vi. p. 74.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 14, cap. 1.—The reader will find a remarkable resemblance to these military usages in those of the early Romans. Comp. Liv., Hist., lib. 1, cap. 32; lib. 4, cap. 30, et alibi.

[34] Ibid., lib. 14, cap. 4, 5.—Acosta, lib. 6, ch. 26.—Col. of Mendoza, ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. i. Pl. 65; vol. vi. p. 72.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

The dress of the higher warriors was picturesque and often magnificent. Their bodies were covered with a close vest of quilted cotton, so thick as to be impenetrable to the light missiles of Indian warfare. This garment was so light and serviceable that it was adopted by the Spaniards. The wealthier chiefs sometimes wore, instead of this cotton mail, a cuirass made of thin plates of gold or silver. Over it was thrown a surcoat of the gorgeous feather-work in which they excelled.[35] Their helmets were sometimes of wood, fashioned like the heads of wild animals, and sometimes of silver, on the top of which waved a *panache* of variegated plumes, sprinkled with precious stones and ornaments of gold. They wore also collars, bracelets, and ear-rings of the same rich materials.[36]

Their armies were divided into bodies of eight thousand men; and these, again, into companies of three or four hundred, each with its own commander. The national standard, which has been compared to the ancient Roman, displayed, in its embroidery of gold

[35] "Their mail, if mail it may be called, was woven
Of vegetable down, like finest flax,
Bleached to the whiteness of new-fallen snow.

* * * * * *

Others, of higher office, were arrayed
In feathery breastplates, of more gorgeous hue
Than the gay plumage of the mountain-cock,
Than the pheasant's glittering pride. But what were these,
Or what the thin gold hauberk, when opposed
To arms like ours in battle?"

Madoc, Part 1, canto 7.

Beautiful painting! One may doubt, however, the propriety of the Welshman's vaunt, before the use of fire-arms.

[36] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 2, cap. 27; lib. 8, cap. 12. — Relatione d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. p. 305. — Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., ubi supra.

and feather-work, the armorial ensigns of the state. These were significant of its name, which, as the names of both persons and places were borrowed from some material object, was easily expressed by hieroglyphical symbols. The companies and the great chiefs had also their appropriate banners and devices, and the gaudy hues of their many-colored plumes gave a dazzling splendor to the spectacle.

Their tactics were such as belong to a nation with whom war, though a trade, is not elevated to the rank of a science. They advanced singing, and shouting their war-cries, briskly charging the enemy, as rapidly retreating, and making use of ambuscades, sudden surprises, and the light skirmish of guerilla warfare. Yet their discipline was such as to draw forth the encomiums of the Spanish conquerors. "A beautiful sight it was," says one of them, "to see them set out on their march, all moving forward so gayly, and in so admirable order!" [37] In battle they did not seek to kill their enemies, so much as to take them prisoners; and they never scalped, like other North American tribes. The valor of a warrior was estimated by the number of his prisoners; and no ransom was large enough to save the devoted captive.[38]

[37] Relatione d'un gentil' huomo, ubi supra.

[38] Col. of Mendoza, ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. i. Pl. 65, 66; vol. vi. p. 73.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 8, cap. 12.—Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte I. cap. 7.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 14, cap. 3.—Relatione d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, loc. cit.—Scalping may claim high authority, or, at least, antiquity. The Father of History gives an account of it among the Scythians, showing that they performed the operation, and wore the hideous trophy, in the same manner as our North American Indians. (Herodot., Hist., Melpomene, sec. 64.) Traces of the same savage custom

Their military code bore the same stern features as their other laws. Disobedience of orders was punished with death. It was death, also, for a soldier to leave his colors, to attack the enemy before the signal was given, or to plunder another's booty or prisoners. One of the last Tezcucan princes, in the spirit of an ancient Roman, put two sons to death—after having cured their wounds—for violating the last-mentioned law.[39]

I must not omit to notice here an institution the introduction of which in the Old World is ranked among the beneficent fruits of Christianity. Hospitals were established in the principal cities, for the cure of the sick and the permanent refuge of the disabled soldier; and surgeons were placed over them, "who were so far better than those in Europe," says an old chronicler, "that they did not protract the cure in order to increase the pay."[40]

Such is the brief outline of the civil and military polity of the ancient Mexicans; less perfect than could be desired in regard to the former, from the imperfection of the sources whence it is drawn. Whoever has had occasion to explore the early history of modern Europe has found how vague and unsatisfactory is the political information which can be gleaned from the gossip of monkish annalists. How much is the difficulty increased in the present instance, where this

are also found in the laws of the Visigoths, among the Franks, and even the Anglo-Saxons. See Guizot, Cours d'Histoire moderne (Paris, 1829), tom. i. p. 283.

[39] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 67.

[40] Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 12, cap. 6; lib. 14, cap. 3.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 36.

information, first recorded in the dubious language of hieroglyphics, was interpreted in another language, with which the Spanish chroniclers were imperfectly acquainted, while it related to institutions of which their past experience enabled them to form no adequate conception! Amidst such uncertain lights, it is in vain to expect nice accuracy of detail. All that can be done is to attempt an outline of the more prominent features, that a correct impression, so far as it goes, may be produced on the mind of the reader.

Enough has been said, however, to show that the Aztec and Tezcucan races were advanced in civilization very far beyond the wandering tribes of North America.[41] The degree of civilization which they had

[41] Zurita is indignant at the epithet of *barbarians* bestowed on the Aztecs; an epithet, he says, "which could come from no one who had personal knowledge of the capacity of the people, or their institutions, and which in some respects is quite as well merited by the European nations." (Rapport, p. 200, et seq.) This is strong language. Yet no one had better means of knowing than this eminent jurist, who for nineteen years held a post in the royal *audiences* of New Spain. During his long residence in the country he had ample opportunity of acquainting himself with its usages, both through his own personal observation and intercourse with the natives, and through the first missionaries who came over after the Conquest. On his return to Spain, probably about 1560, he occupied himself with an answer to queries which had been propounded by the government, on the character of the Aztec laws and institutions, and on that of the modifications introduced by the Spaniards. Much of his treatise is taken up with the latter subject. In what relates to the former he is more brief than could be wished, from the difficulty, perhaps, of obtaining full and satisfactory information as to the details. As far as he goes, however, he manifests a sound and discriminating judgment. He is very rarely betrayed into the extravagance of expression so visible in the writers of the time; and this temperance, combined with his uncommon sources of information, makes his work one of highest

reached, as inferred by their political institutions, may be considered, perhaps, not much short of that enjoyed by our Saxon ancestors under Alfred. In respect to the nature of it, they may be better compared with the Egyptians; and the examination of their social relations and culture may suggest still stronger points of resemblance to that ancient people.

Those familiar with the modern Mexicans will find it difficult to conceive that the nation should ever have been capable of devising the enlightened polity which we have been considering. But they should remember that in the Mexicans of our day they see only a conquered race; as different from their ancestors as are the modern Egyptians from those who built,—I will not say, the tasteless pyramids,—but the temples and palaces whose magnificent wrecks strew the borders of the Nile, at Luxor and Karnac. The difference is not so great as between the ancient Greek, and his degenerate descendant, lounging among the masterpieces of art which he has scarcely taste enough to admire,—speaking the language of those still more imperishable monuments of literature which he has hardly capacity to comprehend. Yet he breathes the same atmosphere, is warmed by the same sun, nourished by the same scenes, as those who fell at Marathon and won the trophies of Olympic Pisa. The same blood flows in his veins that flowed in theirs. But ages of tyranny have passed over him; he belongs to a conquered race.

authority on the limited topics within its range. The original manuscript was consulted by Clavigero, and, indeed, has been used by other writers. The work is now accessible to all, as one of the series of translations from the pen of the indefatigable Ternaux.

The American Indian has something peculiarly sensitive in his nature. He shrinks instinctively from the rude touch of a foreign hand. Even when this foreign influence comes in the form of civilization, he seems to sink and pine away beneath it. It has been so with the Mexicans. Under the Spanish domination, their numbers have silently melted away. Their energies are broken. They no longer tread their mountain plains with the conscious independence of their ancestors. In their faltering step and meek and melancholy aspect we read the sad characters of the conquered race. The cause of humanity, indeed, has gained. They live under a better system of laws, a more assured tranquillity, a purer faith. But all does not avail. Their civilization was of the hardy character which belongs to the wilderness. The fierce virtues of the Aztec were all his own. They refused to submit to European culture,—to be engrafted on a foreign stock. His outward form, his complexion, his lineaments, are substantially the same; but the moral characteristics of the nation, all that constituted its individuality as a race, are effaced forever.

Two of the principal authorities for this chapter are Torquemada and Clavigero. The former, a Provincial of the Franciscan order, came to the New World about the middle of the sixteenth century. As the generation of the Conquerors had not then passed away, he had ample opportunities of gathering the particulars of their enterprise from their own lips. Fifty years, during which he continued in the country, put him in possession of the traditions and usages of the natives, and enabled him to collect their history from the earliest missionaries, as well as from such monuments as the fanaticism of his

own countrymen had not then destroyed. From these ample sources he compiled his bulky tomes, beginning, after the approved fashion of the ancient Castilian chroniclers, with the creation of the world, and embracing the whole circle of the Mexican institutions, political, religious, and social, from the earliest period to his own time. In handling these fruitful themes, the worthy father has shown a full measure of the bigotry which belonged to his order at that period. Every page, too, is loaded with illustrations from Scripture or profane history, which form a whimsical contrast to the barbaric staple of his story; and he has sometimes fallen into serious errors, from his misconception of the chronological system of the Aztecs. But, notwithstanding these glaring defects in the composition of the work, the student, aware of his author's infirmities, will find few better guides than Torquemada in tracing the stream of historic truth up to the fountain-head; such is his manifest integrity, and so great were his facilities for information on the most curious points of Mexican antiquity. No work, accordingly, has been more largely consulted and copied, even by some who, like Herrera, have affected to set little value on the sources whence its information was drawn. (Hist. general, dec. 6, lib. 6, cap. 19.) The *Monarchia Indiana* was first published at Seville, 1615 (Nic. Antonio, Bibliotheca Nova (Matriti, 1783), tom. ii. p. 787), and since, in a better style, in three volumes folio, at Madrid, in 1723.

The other authority, frequently cited in the preceding pages, is the Abbé Clavigero's *Storia antica del Messico.* It was originally printed towards the close of the last century, in the Italian language, and in Italy, whither the author, a native of Vera Cruz, and a member of the order of the Jesuits, had retired, on the expulsion of that body from Spanish America, in 1767. During a residence of thirty-five years in his own country, Clavigero had made himself intimately acquainted with its antiquities, by the careful examination of paintings, manuscripts, and such other remains as were to be found in his day. The plan of his work is nearly as comprehensive as that of his predecessor, Torquemada; but the later and more cultivated period in which he wrote is visible in the superior address with which he has managed his complicated subject. In the elaborate disquisitions in his concluding volume, he has done much to rectify the chronology and the various inaccuracies of preceding writers. Indeed, an avowed object of his work was to vindicate his countrymen from what he conceived to be the misrepresentations of Robertson, Raynal, and De Pau. In regard to the last two he was perfectly successful. Such an ostensible design

might naturally suggest unfavorable ideas of his impartiality. But, on the whole, he seems to have conducted the discussion with good faith; and, if he has been led by national zeal to overcharge the picture with brilliant colors, he will be found much more temperate, in this respect, than those who preceded him, while he has applied sound principles of criticism, of which they were incapable. In a word, the diligence of his researches has gathered into one focus the scattered lights of tradition and antiquarian lore, purified in a great measure from the mists of superstition which obscure the best productions of an earlier period. From these causes, the work, notwithstanding its occasional prolixity, and the disagreeable aspect given to it by the profusion of uncouth names in the Mexican orthography, which bristle over every page, has found merited favor with the public, and created something like a popular interest in the subject. Soon after its publication at Cesena, in 1780, it was translated into English, and more lately into Spanish and German.

CHAPTER III.

MEXICAN MYTHOLOGY.—THE SACERDOTAL ORDER.—THE TEMPLES.—HUMAN SACRIFICES.

THE civil polity of the Aztecs is so closely blended with their religion that without understanding the latter it is impossible to form correct ideas of their government or their social institutions. I shall pass over, for the present, some remarkable traditions, bearing a singular resemblance to those found in the Scriptures, and endeavor to give a brief sketch of their mythology and their careful provisions for maintaining a national worship.

Mythology may be regarded as the poetry of religion, or rather as the poetic development of the religious principle in a primitive age. It is the effort of untutored man to explain the mysteries of existence, and the secret agencies by which the operations of nature are conducted. Although the growth of similar conditions of society, its character must vary with that of the rude tribes in which it originates; and the ferocious Goth, quaffing mead from the skulls of his slaughtered enemies, must have a very different mythology from that of the effeminate native of Hispaniola, loitering away his hours in idle pastimes, under the shadow of his bananas.

At a later and more refined period, we sometimes

find these primitive legends combined into a regular system under the hands of the poet, and the rude outline moulded into forms of ideal beauty, which are the objects of adoration in a credulous age, and the delight of all succeeding ones. Such were the beautiful inventions of Hesiod and Homer, "who," says the Father of History, "created the theogony of the Greeks;" an assertion not to be taken too literally, since it is hardly possible that any man should create a religious system for his nation.[1] They only filled up the shadowy outlines of tradition with the bright touches of their own imaginations, until they had clothed them in beauty which kindled the imaginations of others. The power of the poet, indeed, may be felt in a similar way in a much riper period of society. To say nothing of the "Divina Commedia," who is there that rises from the perusal of "Paradise Lost" without feeling his own conceptions of the angelic hierarchy quickened by those of the inspired artist, and a new and sensible form, as it were, given to images which had before floated dim and undefined before him?

The last-mentioned period is succeeded by that of philosophy; which, disclaiming alike the legends of the primitive age and the poetical embellishments of the succeeding one, seeks to shelter itself from the charge of impiety by giving an allegorical interpreta-

[1] *ποιήσαντες θεογονίην Ἕλλησι.* Herodotus, Euterpe, sec. 53.—Heeren hazards a remark equally strong, respecting the epic poets of India, "who," says he, "have supplied the numerous gods that fill her Pantheon." Historical Researches, Eng. trans. (Oxford, 1833), vol. iii. p. 139.

tion to the popular mythology, and thus to reconcile the latter with the genuine deductions of science.

The Mexican religion had emerged from the first of the periods we have been considering, and, although little affected by poetical influences, had received a peculiar complexion from the priests, who had digested as thorough and burdensome a ceremonial as ever existed in any nation. They had, moreover, thrown the veil of allegory over early tradition, and invested their deities with attributes savoring much more of the grotesque conceptions of the Eastern nations in the Old World, than of the lighter fictions of Greek mythology, in which the features of humanity, however exaggerated, were never wholly abandoned.[2]

In contemplating the religious system of the Aztecs, one is struck with its apparent incongruity, as if some portion of it had emanated from a comparatively refined people, open to gentle influences, while the rest breathes a spirit of unmitigated ferocity. It naturally suggests the idea of two distinct sources, and authorizes the belief that the Aztecs had inherited from their predecessors a milder faith, on which was afterwards engrafted their own mythology. The latter soon became dominant, and gave its dark coloring to the creeds of the conquered nations,—which the Mexicans, like the ancient Romans, seem willingly to have incorporated

[2] The Hon. Mountstuart Elphinstone has fallen into a similar train of thought, in a comparison of the Hindoo and Greek Mythology, in his "History of India," published since the remarks in the text were written. (See Book I. ch. 4.) The same chapter of this truly philosophic work suggests some curious points of resemblance to the Aztec religious institutions, that may furnish pertinent illustrations to the mind bent on tracing the affinities of the Asiatic and American races.

into their own,—until the same funereal superstition settled over the farthest borders of Anahuac.

The Aztecs recognized the existence of a supreme Creator and Lord of the universe. They addressed him, in their prayers, as "the God by whom we live," "omnipresent, that knoweth all thoughts, and giveth all gifts," "without whom man is as nothing," "invisible, incorporeal, one God, of *perfect perfection* and purity," "under whose wings we find repose and a sure defence." These sublime attributes infer no inadequate conception of the true God. But the idea of unity—of a being with whom volition is action, who has no need of inferior ministers to execute his purposes—was too simple, or too vast, for their understandings; and they sought relief, as usual, in a plurality of deities, who presided over the elements, the changes of the seasons, and the various occupations of man.[3] Of these, there were thirteen principal deities, and more than two hundred inferior; to each of whom some special day or appropriate festival was consecrated.[4]

[3] Ritter has well shown, by the example of the Hindoo system, how the idea of unity suggests, of itself, that of plurality. History of Ancient Philosophy, Eng. trans. (Oxford, 1838), book 2, ch. 1.

[4] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 6, passim.—Acosta, lib. 5, ch. 9.—Boturini, Idea, p. 8, et seq.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 1.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—The Mexicans, according to Clavigero, believed in an evil Spirit, the enemy of the human race, whose barbarous name signified "Rational Owl." (Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 2.) The curate Bernaldez speaks of the Devil being embroidered on the dresses of Columbus's Indians, in the likeness of an owl. (Historia de los Reyes Católicos, MS., cap. 131.) This must not be confounded, however, with the evil Spirit in the mythology of the North American Indians (see Heckewelder's Account, ap. Trans-

At the head of all stood the terrible Huitzilopochtli, the Mexican Mars; although it is doing injustice to the heroic war-god of antiquity to identify him with this sanguinary monster. This was the patron deity of the nation. His fantastic image was loaded with costly ornaments. His temples were the most stately and august of the public edifices; and his altars reeked with the blood of human hecatombs in every city of the empire. Disastrous indeed must have been the influence of such a superstition on the character of the people.[5]

actions of the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, vol. i. p. 205), still less with the evil Principle of the Oriental nations of the Old World. It was only one among many deities, for evil was found too liberally mingled in the natures of most of the Aztec gods—in the same manner as with the Greeks—to admit of its personification by any one.

5 Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 3, cap. 1, et seq.—Acosta, lib. 5, ch. 9.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 6, cap. 21.—Boturini, Idea, pp. 27, 28.—Huitzilopochtli is compounded of two words, signifying "humming-bird," and "left," from his image having the feathers of this bird on its left foot (Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 17); an amiable etymology for so ruffian a deity.*—The fantastic

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* [The name may possibly have referred to the whispered oracles and intimations in dreams—such as "a little bird of the air" is still fabled to convey—by which, according to the legend, the deity had guided his people in their migrations and conquests. That it had a symbolical meaning will hardly be doubted, and M. Brasseur de Bourbourg, who had originally explained it as "Huitzil the Left-handed," —the proper name of a deified hero with the addition of a descriptive epithet,—has since found one of too deep an import to be briefly expounded or easily understood. (Quatre Lettres sur le Mexique (Paris, 1868), p. 201, et al.) *Mexitl*, another name of the same deity, is translated "the hare of the aloes." In some accounts the two are distinct personages. Mythological science rejects the legend, and re-

A far more interesting personage in their mythology was Quetzalcoatl, god of the air, a divinity who, during

forms of the Mexican idols were in the highest degree symbolical. See Gama's learned exposition of the devices on the statue of the goddess found in the great square of Mexico. (Descripcion de las Dos Piedras (México, 1832), Parte 1, pp. 34–44.) The tradition respecting the origin of this god, or, at least, his appearance on earth, is curious. He was born of a woman. His mother, a devout person, one day, in her attendance on the temple, saw a ball of bright-colored feathers floating in the air. She took it, and deposited it in her bosom. She soon after found herself pregnant, and the dread deity was born, coming into the world, like Minerva, all armed,—with a spear in the right hand, a shield in the left, and his head surmounted by a crest of green plumes. (See Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 19, et seq.) A similar notion in respect to the incarnation of their principal deity existed among the people of India beyond the Ganges, of China, and of Thibet. "Budh," says Milman, in his learned and luminous work on the History of Christianity, "according to a tradition known in the West, was born of a virgin. So were the Fohi of China, and the Schakaof of Thibet, no doubt the same, whether a mythic or a real personage. The Jesuits in China, says Barrow, were appalled at finding in the mythology of that country the counterpart of the Virgo Deipara." (Vol. i. p. 99, note.) The existence of similar religious ideas in remote regions, inhabited by different races, is an interesting subject of study; furnishing, as it does, one of the most important links in the great chain of communication which binds together the distant families of nations.

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gards the Aztec war-god as a "nature-deity," a personification of the lightning, this being a natural type of warlike might, of which the common symbol, the serpent, was represented among the decorations of the idol. (Myths of the New World, p. 118.) More commonly he has been identified with the sun, and Mr. Tylor, while declining "to attempt a general solution of this inextricable compound parthenogenetic deity," notices the association of his principal festival with the winter's solstice, and the fact that his paste idol was then shot through with an arrow, as tending to show that the life and death of the deity were emblematic of the year's, "while his functions of war-god may have been of later addition." Primitive Culture, tom. ii. p. 279.—ED.]

his residence on earth, instructed the natives in the use of metals, in agriculture, and in the arts of government. He was one of those benefactors of their species, doubtless, who have been deified by the gratitude of posterity. Under him, the earth teemed with fruits and flowers, without the pains of culture. An ear of Indian corn was as much as a single man could carry. The cotton, as it grew, took, of its own accord, the rich dyes of human art. The air was filled with intoxicating perfumes and the sweet melody of birds. In short, these were the halcyon days, which find a place in the mythic systems of so many nations in the Old World. It was the *golden age* of Anahuac.

From some cause, not explained, Quetzalcoatl incurred the wrath of one of the principal gods, and was compelled to abandon the country. On his way he stopped at the city of Cholula, where a temple was dedicated to his worship, the massy ruins of which still form one of the most interesting relics of antiquity in Mexico. When he reached the shores of the Mexican Gulf, he took leave of his followers, promising that he and his descendants would revisit them hereafter, and then, entering his wizard skiff, made of serpents' skins, embarked on the great ocean for the fabled land of Tlapallan. He was said to have been tall in stature, with a white skin, long, dark hair, and a flowing beard. The Mexicans looked confidently to the return of the benevolent deity; and this remarkable tradition, deeply cherished in their hearts, prepared the way, as we shall see hereafter, for the future success of the Spaniards.[6]

[6] Codex Vaticanus, Pl. 15, and Codex Telleriano-Remensis, Part. 2, Pl. 2, ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vols. i., vi.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-

We have not space for further details respecting the Mexican divinities, the attributes of many of whom

España, lib. 3, cap. 3, 4, 13, 14.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 6, cap. 24.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 1.—Gomara, Crónica de la Nueva-España, cap. 222, ap. Barcia, Historiadores primitivos de las Indias Occidentales (Madrid, 1749), tom. ii.—Quetzalcoatl signifies "feathered serpent." The last syllable means, likewise, a "twin;" which furnished an argument for Dr. Siguenza to identify this god with the apostle Thomas (Didymus signifying also a twin), who, he supposes, came over to America to preach the gospel. In this rather startling conjecture he is supported by several of his devout countrymen, who appear to have as little doubt of the fact as of the advent of St. James, for a similar purpose, in the mother-country. See the various authorities and arguments set forth with becoming gravity in Dr. Mier's dissertation in Bustamante's edition of Sahagun (lib. 3, Suplem.), and Veytia (tom. i. pp. 160–200). Our ingenious countryman McCulloh carries the Aztec god up to a still more respectable antiquity, by identifying him with the patriarch Noah. Researches, Philosophical and Antiquarian, concerning the Aboriginal History of America (Baltimore, 1829), p. 233.*

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* [Under the modern system of mythical interpretation, which has been applied by Dr. Brinton with singular force and ingenuity to the traditions of the New World, Quetzalcoatl, "the central figure of Toltec mythology," with the corresponding figures found in the legends of the Mayas, Quichés, Peruvians, and other races, loses all personal existence, and becomes a creation of that primitive religious sentiment which clothed the uncomprehended powers of nature with the attributes of divinity. His name, "Bird-Serpent," unites the emblems of the wind and the lightning. "He is both lord of the eastern light and the winds. As the former, he was born of a virgin in the land of Tula or Tlapallan, in the distant Orient, and was high-priest of that happy realm. The morning star was his symbol.... Like all the dawn heroes, he too was represented as of white complexion, clothed in long white robes, and, as most of the Aztec gods, with a full and flowing beard. When his earthly work was done, he too returned to the east, assigning as a reason that the sun, the ruler of Tlapallan, demanded his presence. But the real motive was that

were carefully defined, as they descended, in regular gradation, to the *penates* or household gods, whose little images were to be found in the humblest dwelling.

he had been overcome by Tezcatlipoca, otherwise called Yoalliehecatl, the wind or spirit of the night, who had descended from heaven by a spider's web and presented his rival with a draught pretended to confer immortality, but, in fact, producing uncontrollable longing for home. For the wind and the light both depart when the gloaming draws near, or when the clouds spread their dark and shadowy webs along the mountains and pour the vivifying rain upon the fields. . . . Wherever he went, all manner of singing birds bore him company, emblems of the whistling breezes. When he finally disappeared in the far east, he sent back four trusty youths, who had ever shared his fortunes, incomparably swift and light of foot, with directions to divide the earth between them and rule it till he should return and resume his power." (The Myths of the New World, p. 180, et seq.) So far as mere physical attributes are concerned, this analysis may be accepted as a satisfactory elucidation of the class of figures to which it relates. But the grand and distinguishing characteristic of these figures is the moral and intellectual eminence ascribed to them. They are invested with the highest qualities of humanity,—attributes neither drawn from the external phenomena of nature nor born of any rude sentiment of wonder and fear. Their lives and doctrines are in strong contrast with those of the ordinary divinities of the same or other lands, and they are objects not of a propitiatory worship, but of a pious veneration. Can we, then, assent to the conclusion that under this aspect also they were "wholly mythical," "creations of the religious fancy," "ideals summing up in themselves the best traits, the most approved virtues, of whole nations"? (Ibid., pp. 293, 294.) This would seem to imply that nations may attain to lofty conceptions of moral truth and excellence by a process of selection, without any standard or point of view furnished by living embodiments of the ideal. But this would be as impossible as to arrive at conceptions of the highest forms and ideas of art independently of the special genius and actual productions of the artist. In the one case, as in the other, the ideal is derived originally from examples shaped by finer and deeper intuitions than those of the masses. "Im Anfang war die That." The mere fact, therefore, that the Mexican people recognized an exalted ideal of purity and wisdom is a sufficient proof that men had existed among them who

The Aztecs felt the curiosity, common to man in almost every stage of civilization, to lift the veil which covers the mysterious past and the more awful future. They sought relief, like the nations of the Old Continent, from the oppressive idea of eternity, by breaking it up into distinct cycles, or periods of time, each of several thousand years' duration. There were four of these cycles, and at the end of each, by the agency of one of the elements, the human family was swept from the earth, and the sun blotted out from the heavens, to be again rekindled.[7]

7 Cod. Vat., Pl. 7–10, Antiq. of Mexico, vols. i., vi.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 1.—M. de Humboldt has been at some pains to trace the analogy between the Aztec cosmogony and that of Eastern Asia. He has tried, though in vain, to find a multiple which might serve as the key to the calculations of the former. (Vues des Cordillères, pp. 202–212.) In truth, there seems to be a material discordance in the Mexican statements, both in regard to the number of revolutions and their duration. A manuscript before me, of Ixtlilxochitl, reduces them to three, before the present state of the world, and allows only 4394 years for them (Sumaria Relacion, MS., No. 1); Gama, on the faith of an ancient Indian MS. in Boturini's Catalogue (viii. 13), reduces the duration still lower (Descripcion de las Dos Piedras, Parte 1, p. 49, et seq.); while the cycles of the Vatican paintings take up near 18,000 years.—It is interesting to observe how the wild *conjectures* of an ignorant age have been confirmed by the more recent *discoveries* in geology, making it probable that the earth has

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displayed these qualities in an eminent degree. The status of their civilization, imperfect as it was, can be accounted for only in the same way. Comparative mythology may resolve into its original elements a personification of the forces of nature woven by the religious fancy of primitive races, but it cannot sever that chain of discoverers and civilizers by which mankind has been drawn from the abysses of savage ignorance, and by which its progress, when uninterrupted, has been always maintained.—ED.]

They imagined three separate states of existence in the future life. The wicked, comprehending the greater part of mankind, were to expiate their sins in a place of everlasting darkness. Another class, with no other merit than that of having died of certain diseases, capriciously selected, were to enjoy a negative existence of indolent contentment. The highest place was reserved, as in most warlike nations, for the heroes who fell in battle, or in sacrifice. They passed at once into the presence of the Sun, whom they accompanied with songs and choral dances in his bright progress through the heavens; and, after some years, their spirits went to animate the clouds and singing-birds of beautiful plumage, and to revel amidst the rich blossoms and odors of the gardens of paradise.[8] Such was the heaven of the Aztecs; more refined in its character than that of the more polished pagan, whose elysium reflected only the martial sports or sensual gratifications of this life.[9] In the destiny they

experienced a number of convulsions, possibly thousands of years distant from each other, which have swept away the races then existing, and given a new aspect to the globe.

[8] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 3, Apend.—Cod. Vat., ap. Antiq. of Mexico, Pl. 1–5.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 13, cap. 48.—The last writer assures us "that, as to what the Aztecs said of their going to hell, they were right; for, as they died in ignorance of the true faith, they have, without question, all gone there to suffer everlasting punishment"! Ubi supra.

[9] It conveys but a poor idea of these pleasures, that the shade of Achilles can say "he had rather be the slave of the meanest man on earth, than sovereign among the dead." (Odyss., A. 488–490.) The Mahometans believe that the souls of martyrs pass, after death, into the bodies of birds, that haunt the sweet waters and bowers of Paradise. (Sale's Koran (London, 1825), vol. i. p. 106.)—The Mexican

assigned to the wicked, we discern similar traces of refinement; since the absence of all physical torture forms a striking contrast to the schemes of suffering so ingeniously devised by the fancies of the most enlightened nations.[10] In all this, so contrary to the natural suggestions of the ferocious Aztec, we see the evidences of a higher civilization,* inherited from their predecessors in the land.

Our limits will allow only a brief allusion to one or two of their most interesting ceremonies. On the death of a person, his corpse was dressed in the peculiar habiliments of his tutelar deity. It was strewed with pieces of paper, which operated as charms against the dangers of the dark road he was to travel. A throng of slaves, if he were rich, was sacrificed at his obsequies. His body was burned, and the ashes, collected in a vase, were preserved in one of the apart-

heaven may remind one of Dante's, in its *material* enjoyments; which, in both, are made up of light, music, and motion. The sun, it must also be remembered, was a spiritual conception with the Aztec:

> "He sees with other eyes than theirs; where they
> Behold a sun, he spies a deity."

[10] It is singular that the Tuscan bard, while exhausting his invention in devising modes of bodily torture, in his "Inferno," should have made so little use of the *moral* sources of misery. That he has not done so might be reckoned a strong proof of the rudeness of the time, did we not meet with examples of it in a later day; in which a serious and sublime writer, like Dr. Watts, does not disdain to employ the same coarse machinery for moving the conscience of the reader.

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* [It should perhaps be regarded rather as evidence of a low civilization, since the absence of any strict ideas of retribution is a characteristic of the notions in regard to a future life entertained by savage races. See Tylor, Primitive Culture, vol. ii. p. 76, et seq.—ED.]

ments of his house. Here we have successively the usages of the Roman Catholic, the Mussulman, the Tartar, and the ancient Greek and Roman; curious coincidences, which may show how cautious we should be in adopting conclusions founded on analogy.[11]

A more extraordinary coincidence may be traced with Christian rites, in the ceremony of naming their children. The lips and bosom of the infant were sprinkled with water, and "the Lord was implored to permit the holy drops to wash away the sin that was given to it before the foundation of the world; so that the child might be born anew."[12] We are reminded of Christian morals, in more than one of their prayers, in which they used regular forms. "Wilt thou blot us out, O Lord, forever? Is this punishment intended, not for our reformation, but for our destruction?" Again, "Impart to us, out of thy great mercy, thy

[11] Carta del Lic. Zuazo (Nov. 1521), MS.—Acosta, lib. 5, cap. 8.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 13, cap. 45.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 3, Apend.—Sometimes the body was buried entire, with valuable treasures, if the deceased was rich. The "Anonymous Conqueror," as he is called, saw gold to the value of 3000 castellanos drawn from one of these tombs. Relatione d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. p. 310.

[12] This interesting rite, usually solemnized with great formality, in the presence of the assembled friends and relatives, is detailed with minuteness by Sahagun (Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 6, cap. 37), and by Zuazo (Carta, MS.), both of them eye-witnesses. For a version of part of Sahagun's account, see Appendix, Part 1, note 26.*

* [A similar rite of baptism, founded on the natural symbolism of the purifying power of water, was practised by other races in America, and had existed in the East, as the reader need hardly be told, long anterior to Christianity.—ED.]

gifts, which we are not worthy to receive through our own merits." "Keep peace with all," says another petition; "bear injuries with humility; God, who sees, will avenge you." But the most striking parallel with Scripture is in the remarkable declaration that "he who looks too curiously on a woman commits adultery with his eyes."[13] These pure and elevated maxims, it is true, are mixed up with others of a puerile, and even brutal, character, arguing that confusion of the moral perceptions which is natural in the twilight of civilization. One would not expect, however, to meet, in such a state of society, with doctrines as sublime as any inculcated by the enlightened codes of ancient philosophy.[14]

[13] "¿Es posible que este azote y este castigo no se nos dá para nuestra correccion y enmienda, sino para total destruccion y asolamiento?" (Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 6, cap. 1.) "Y esto por sola vuestra liberalidad y magnificencia lo habeis de hacer, que ninguno es digno ni merecedor de recibir vuestra larguezas por su dignidad y merecimiento, sino que por vuestra benignidad." (Ibid., lib. 6, cap. 2.) "Sed sufridos y reportados, que Dios bien os vé y responderá por vosotros, y él os vengará (á) sed humildes con todos, y con esto os hará Dios merced y tambien honra." (Ibid., lib. 6, cap. 17.) "Tampoco mires con curiosidad el gesto y disposicion de la gente principal, mayormente de las mugeres, y sobre todo de las casadas, porque dice el refran que él que curiosamente mira á la muger adultera con la vista." (Ibid., lib. 6, cap. 22.)

[14] [On reviewing the remarkable coincidences shown in the above pages with the sentiments and even the phraseology of Scripture, we cannot but admit there is plausible ground for Mr. Gallatin's conjecture that the Mexicans, after the Conquest, attributed to their remote ancestors ideas which more properly belonged to a generation coeval with the Conquest, and brought into contact with the Europeans. "The substance," he remarks, "may be true; but several of the prayers convey elevated and correct notions of a Supreme Being, which appear to me altogether inconsistent with that which we know

But, although the Aztec mythology gathered nothing from the beautiful inventions of the poet or from the refinements of philosophy, it was much indebted, as I have noticed, to the priests, who endeavored to dazzle the imagination of the people by the most formal and pompous ceremonial. The influence of the priesthood must be greatest in an imperfect state of civilization, where it engrosses all the scanty science of the time in its own body. This is particularly the case when the science is of that spurious kind which is less occupied with the real phenomena of nature than with the fanciful chimeras of human superstition. Such are the sciences of astrology and divination, in which the Aztec priests were well initiated; and, while they seemed to hold the keys of the future in their own hands, they impressed the ignorant people with sentiments of superstitious awe, beyond that which has probably existed in any other country,—even in ancient Egypt.

The sacerdotal order was very numerous; as may be

to have been their practical religion and worship."* Transactions of the American Ethnological Society, i. 210.]

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* [It is evident that an inconsistency such as belongs to all religions, and to human nature in general, affords no sufficient ground for doubting the authenticity of the prayers reported by Sahagun. Similar specimens of prayers used by the Peruvians have been preserved, and, like those of the Aztecs, exhibit, in their recognition of spiritual as distinct from material blessings, a contrast to the forms of petition employed by the wholly uncivilized races of the north. They are in harmony with the purer conceptions of morality which those nations are admitted to have possessed, and which formed the real basis of their civilization.—ED.]

inferred from the statement that five thousand priests were, in some way or other, attached to the principal temple in the capital. The various ranks and functions of this multitudinous body were discriminated with great exactness. Those best instructed in music took the management of the choirs. Others arranged the festivals conformably to the calendar. Some superintended the education of youth, and others had charge of the hieroglyphical paintings and oral traditions; while the dismal rites of sacrifice were reserved for the chief dignitaries of the order. At the head of the whole establishment were two high-priests, elected from the order, as it would seem, by the king and principal nobles, without reference to birth, but solely for their qualifications, as shown by their previous conduct in a subordinate station. They were equal in dignity, and inferior only to the sovereign, who rarely acted without their advice in weighty matters of public concern.[15]

The priests were each devoted to the service of some particular deity, and had quarters provided within the spacious precincts of their temple; at least, while engaged in immediate attendance there,—for they were

[15] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 2, Apend.; lib. 3, cap. 9.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 8, cap. 20; lib. 9, cap. 3, 56.—Gomara, Crón., cap. 215, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.—Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 4.—Clavigero says that the high-priest was necessarily a person of rank. (Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 37.) I find no authority for this, not even in his oracle, Torquemada, who expressly says, "There is no warrant for the assertion, however probable the fact may be." (Monarch. Ind., lib. 9, cap. 5.) It is contradicted by Sahagun, whom I have followed as the highest authority in these matters. Clavigero had no other knowledge of Sahagun's work than what was filtered through the writings of Torquemada and later authors.

allowed to marry, and have families of their own. In this monastic residence they lived in all the stern severity of conventual discipline. Thrice during the day, and once at night, they were called to prayers. They were frequent in their ablutions and vigils, and mortified the flesh by fasting and cruel penance,—drawing blood from their bodies by flagellation, or by piercing them with the thorns of the aloe; in short, by practising all those austerities to which fanaticism (to borrow the strong language of the poet) has resorted, in every age of the world,

"In hopes to merit heaven by making earth a hell." [16]

The great cities were divided into districts, placed under the charge of a sort of parochial clergy, who regulated every act of religion within their precincts. It is remarkable that they administered the rites of confession and absolution. The secrets of the confessional were held inviolable, and penances were imposed of much the same kind as those enjoined in the Roman Catholic Church. There were two remarkable peculiarities in the Aztec ceremony. The first was, that, as the repetition of an offence once atoned for was deemed inexpiable, confession was made but once in a man's life, and was usually deferred to a late period of it, when the penitent unburdened his conscience and settled at once the long arrears of iniquity. Another peculiarity was, that priestly absolution was received in place of the legal punishment of offences, and authorized an acquittal in case of

[16] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, ubi supra.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 9, cap. 25.—Gomara, Crón., ap. Barcia, ubi supra.—Acosta, lib. 5, cap. 14, 17.

arrest. Long after the Conquest, the simple natives, when they came under the arm of the law, sought to escape by producing the certificate of their confession.[17]

One of the most important duties of the priesthood was that of education, to which certain buildings were appropriated within the enclosure of the principal temple. Here the youth of both sexes, of the higher and middling orders, were placed at a very tender age. The girls were intrusted to the care of priestesses; for women were allowed to exercise sacerdotal functions, except those of sacrifice.[18] In these institutions the

[17] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 1, cap. 12; lib. 6, cap. 7. —The address of the confessor, on these occasions, contains some things too remarkable to be omitted. "O merciful Lord," he says, in his prayer, "thou who knowest the secrets of all hearts, let thy forgiveness and favor descend, like the pure waters of heaven, to wash away the stains from the soul. Thou knowest that this poor man *has sinned, not from his own free will*, but from the influence of the sign under which he was born." After a copious exhortation to the penitent, enjoining a variety of mortifications and minute ceremonies by way of penance, and particularly urging the necessity of instantly procuring *a slave for sacrifice* to the Deity, the priest concludes with inculcating charity to the poor. "Clothe the naked and feed the hungry, whatever privations it may cost thee; for remember, *their flesh is like thine, and they are men like thee.*" Such is the strange medley of truly Christian benevolence and heathenish abominations which pervades the Aztec litany,—intimating sources widely different.

[18] The Egyptian gods were also served by priestesses. (See Herodotus, Euterpe, sec. 54.) Tales of scandal similar to those which the Greeks circulated respecting them, have been told of the Aztec virgins. (See Le Noir's dissertation, ap. Antiquités Mexicaines (Paris, 1834), tom. ii. p. 7, note.) The early missionaries, credulous enough certainly, give no countenance to such reports; and Father Acosta, on the contrary, exclaims, "In truth, it is very strange to see that this false opinion of religion hath so great force among these yoong men and maidens of Mexico, that they will serve the Divell with so great rigor and austerity, which many of us doe not in the service of the

boys were drilled in the routine of monastic discipline; they decorated the shrines of the gods with flowers, fed the sacred fires, and took part in the religious chants and festivals. Those in the higher school—the *Calmecac*, as it was called—were initiated in their traditionary lore, the mysteries of hieroglyphics, the principles of government, and such branches of astronomical and natural science as were within the compass of the priesthood. The girls learned various feminine employments, especially to weave and embroider rich coverings for the altars of the gods. Great attention was paid to the moral discipline of both sexes. The most perfect decorum prevailed; and offences were punished with extreme rigor, in some instances with death itself. Terror, not love, was the spring of education with the Aztecs.[19]

At a suitable age for marrying, or for entering into the world, the pupils were dismissed, with much ceremony, from the convent, and the recommendation of the principal often introduced those most competent to responsible situations in public life. Such was the crafty policy of the Mexican priests, who, by reserving to themselves the business of instruction, were enabled

most high God; the which is a great shame and confusion." Eng. trans., lib. 5, cap. 16.

[19] Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 9.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 2, Apend.; lib. 3, cap. 4–8.—Zurita, Rapport, pp. 123–126.—Acosta, lib. 5, cap. 15, 16.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 9, cap. 11–14, 30, 31.—"They were taught," says the good father last cited, "to eschew vice, and cleave to virtue,—*according to their notions of them;* namely, to abstain from wrath, to offer violence and do wrong to no man,—in short, to perform the duties plainly pointed out by natural religion."

to mould the young and plastic mind according to their own wills, and to train it early to implicit reverence for religion and its ministers; a reverence which still maintained its hold on the iron nature of the warrior, long after every other vestige of education had been effaced by the rough trade to which he was devoted.

To each of the principal temples, lands were annexed for the maintenance of the priests. These estates were augmented by the policy or devotion of successive princes, until, under the last Montezuma, they had swollen to an enormous extent, and covered every district of the empire. The priests took the management of their property into their own hands; and they seem to have treated their tenants with the liberality and indulgence characteristic of monastic corporations. Besides the large supplies drawn from this source, the religious order was enriched with the first-fruits, and such other offerings as piety or superstition dictated. The surplus beyond what was required for the support of the national worship was distributed in alms among the poor; a duty strenuously prescribed by their moral code. Thus we find the same religion inculcating lessons of pure philanthropy, on the one hand, and of merciless extermination, as we shall soon see, on the other. The inconsistency will not appear incredible to those who are familiar with the history of the Roman Catholic Church, in the early ages of the Inquisition.[20]

[20] Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 8, cap. 20, 21.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—It is impossible not to be struck with the great resemblance, not merely in a few empty forms, but in the whole way of life, of the Mexican and Egyptian priesthood. Compare Herod-

The Mexican temples—*teocallis*, "houses of God," as they were called*—were very numerous. There were several hundreds in each of the principal cities, many of them, doubtless, very humble edifices. They were solid masses of earth, cased with brick or stone, and in their form somewhat resembled the pyramidal structures of ancient Egypt. The bases of many of them were more than a hundred feet square, and they towered to a still greater height. They were distributed into four or five stories, each of smaller dimensions than that below. The ascent was by a flight of steps, at an angle of the pyramid, on the outside. This led to a sort of terrace, or gallery, at the base of the second story, which passed quite round the building to another flight of stairs, commencing also at the same angle as the preceding and directly over it, and leading to a similar terrace; so that one had to make the circuit of the temple several times, before reaching the summit. In some instances the stairway led directly up the centre of the western face of the building. The top was a

otus (Euterpe, passim) and Diodorus (lib. 1, sec. 73, 81). The English reader may consult, for the same purpose, Heeren (Hist. Res., vol. v. chap. 2), Wilkinson (Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians (London, 1837), vol. i. pp. 257–279), the last writer especially,—who has contributed, more than all others, towards opening to us the interior of the social life of this interesting people.

* [Humboldt has noticed the curious similarity of the word *teocalli* with the Greek compound—actual or possible—*θεοκαλία*; and Buschmann observes, "Die Übereinstimmung des mex. teotl und *θεός*, arithmetisch sehr hoch anzuschlagen wegen des Doppelvocals, zeigt wie weit es der Zufall in Wortähnlichkeiten zwischen ganz verschiedenen Sprachen bringen kann." Uber die aztekischen Ortsnamen, S. 627.—ED.]

broad area, on which were erected one or two towers, forty or fifty feet high, the sanctuaries in which stood the sacred images of the presiding deities. Before these towers stood the dreadful stone of sacrifice, and two lofty altars, on which fires were kept, as inextinguishable as those in the temple of Vesta. There were said to be six hundred of these altars, on smaller buildings within the enclosure of the great temple of Mexico, which, with those on the sacred edifices in other parts of the city, shed a brilliant illumination over its streets, through the darkest night.[21]

From the construction of their temples, all religious services were public. The long processions of priests, winding round their massive sides, as they rose higher and higher towards the summit, and the dismal rites of sacrifice performed there, were all visible from the remotest corners of the capital, impressing on the spectator's mind a superstitious veneration for the mysteries of his religion, and for the dread ministers by whom they were interpreted.

This impression was kept in full force by their numerous festivals. Every month was consecrated to some protecting deity; and every week, nay, almost every

[21] Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 307.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Acosta, lib. 5, cap. 13.—Gomara, Crón., cap. 80, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.—Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 4.—Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.—This last writer, who visited Mexico immediately after the Conquest, in 1521, assures us that some of the smaller temples, or pyramids, were filled with earth impregnated with odoriferous gums and gold dust; the latter sometimes in such quantities as probably to be worth a million of *castellanos!* (Ubi supra.) These were the temples of Mammon, indeed! But I find no confirmation of such golden reports.

day, was set down in their calendar for some appropriate celebration; so that it is difficult to understand how the ordinary business of life could have been compatible with the exactions of religion. Many of their ceremonies were of a light and cheerful complexion, consisting of the national songs and dances, in which both sexes joined. Processions were made of women and children crowned with garlands and bearing offerings of fruits, the ripened maize, or the sweet incense of copal and other odoriferous gums, while the altars of the deity were stained with no blood save that of animals.[22] These were the peaceful rites derived from their Toltec predecessors, on which the fierce Aztecs engrafted a superstition too loathsome to be exhibited in all its nakedness, and one over which I would gladly draw a veil altogether, but that it would leave the reader in ignorance of their most striking institution, and one that had the greatest influence in forming the national character.

Human sacrifices were adopted by the Aztecs early in the fourteenth century, about two hundred years before the Conquest.[23] Rare at first, they became more frequent with the wider extent of their empire;

[22] Cod. Tel.-Rem., Pl. 1, and Cod. Vat., passim, ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vols. i., vi.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 10, cap. 10, et seq.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 2, passim.—Among the offerings, quails may be particularly noticed, for the incredible quantities of them sacrificed and consumed at many of the festivals.

[23] The traditions of their origin have somewhat of a fabulous tinge. But, whether true or false, they are equally indicative of unparalleled ferocity in the people who could be the subject of them. Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 167, et seq.; also Humboldt (who does not appear to doubt them), Vues des Cordillères, p. 95.

till, at length, almost every festival was closed with this cruel abomination. These religious ceremonials were generally arranged in such a manner as to afford a type of the most prominent circumstances in the character or history of the deity who was the object of them. A single example will suffice.

One of their most important festivals was that in honor of the god Tezcatlipoca, whose rank was inferior only to that of the Supreme Being. He was called "the soul of the world," and supposed to have been its creator. He was depicted as a handsome man, endowed with perpetual youth. A year before the intended sacrifice, a captive, distinguished for his personal beauty, and without a blemish on his body, was selected to represent this deity. Certain tutors took charge of him, and instructed him how to perform his new part with becoming grace and dignity. He was arrayed in a splendid dress, regaled with incense and with a profusion of sweet-scented flowers, of which the ancient Mexicans were as fond as their descendants at the present day. When he went abroad, he was attended by a train of the royal pages, and, as he halted in the streets to play some favorite melody, the crowd prostrated themselves before him, and did him homage as the representative of their good deity. In this way he led an easy, luxurious life, till within a month of his sacrifice. Four beautiful girls, bearing the names of the principal goddesses, were then selected to share the honors of his bed; and with them he continued to live in idle dalliance, feasted at the banquets of the principal nobles, who paid him all the honors of a divinity.

At length the fatal day of sacrifice arrived. The

term of his short-lived glories was at an end. He was stripped of his gaudy apparel, and bade adieu to the fair partners of his revelries. One of the royal barges transported him across the lake to a temple which rose on its margin, about a league from the city. Hither the inhabitants of the capital flocked, to witness the consummation of the ceremony. As the sad procession wound up the sides of the pyramid, the unhappy victim threw away his gay chaplets of flowers, and broke in pieces the musical instruments with which he had solaced the hours of captivity. On the summit he was received by six priests, whose long and matted locks flowed disorderly over their sable robes, covered with hieroglyphic scrolls of mystic import. They led him to the sacrificial stone, a huge block of jasper, with its upper surface somewhat convex. On this the prisoner was stretched. Five priests secured his head and his limbs; while the sixth, clad in a scarlet mantle, emblematic of his bloody office, dexterously opened the breast of the wretched victim with a sharp razor of *itztli*,—a volcanic substance, hard as flint,—and, inserting his hand in the wound, tore out the palpitating heart. The minister of death, first holding this up towards the sun, an object of worship throughout Anahuac, cast it at the feet of the deity to whom the temple was devoted, while the multitudes below prostrated themselves in humble adoration. The tragic story of this prisoner was expounded by the priests as the type of human destiny, which, brilliant in its commencement, too often closes in sorrow and disaster.[24]

[24] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 2, cap. 2, 5, 24, et alibi.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 3, lib. 2, cap. 16.—Torquemada, Mo-

Such was the form of human sacrifice usually practised by the Aztecs. It was the same that often met the indignant eyes of the Europeans in their progress through the country, and from the dreadful doom of which they themselves were not exempted. There were, indeed, some occasions when preliminary tortures, of the most exquisite kind,—with which it is unnecessary to shock the reader,—were inflicted, but they always terminated with the bloody ceremony above described. It should be remarked, however, that such tortures were not the spontaneous suggestions of cruelty, as with the North American Indians, but were all rigorously prescribed in the Aztec ritual, and doubtless were often inflicted with the same compunctious visitings which a devout familiar of the Holy Office might at times experience in executing its stern decrees.[25] Women, as well as the

narch. Ind., lib. 7, cap. 19; lib. 10, cap. 14.—Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 307.—Acosta, lib. 5, cap. 9-21.—Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.—Relacion por el Regimiento de Vera Cruz (Julio, 1519), MS.—Few readers, probably, will sympathize with the sentence of Torquemada, who concludes his tale of woe by coolly dismissing "the soul of the victim, to sleep with those of his false gods, in hell!" Lib. 10, cap. 23.

[25] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 2, cap. 10, 29.—Gomara, Crón., cap. 219, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.—Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 6-11.—The reader will find a tolerably exact picture of the nature of these tortures in the twenty-first canto of the "Inferno." The fantastic creations of the Florentine poet were nearly realized, at the very time he was writing, by the barbarians of an unknown world. One sacrifice, of a less revolting character, deserves to be mentioned. The Spaniards called it the "gladiatorial sacrifice," and it may remind one of the bloody games of antiquity. A captive of distinction was sometimes furnished with arms, and brought against a number of Mexicans in succession. If he defeated them all, as did occasionally happen, he was allowed to escape. If vanquished, he was dragged to

other sex, were sometimes reserved for sacrifice. On some occasions, particularly in seasons of drought, at the festival of the insatiable Tlaloc, the god of rain, children, for the most part infants, were offered up. As they were borne along in open litters, dressed in their festal robes, and decked with the fresh blossoms of spring, they moved the hardest heart to pity, though their cries were drowned in the wild chant of the priests, who read in their tears a favorable augury for their petition. These innocent victims were generally bought by the priests of parents who were poor, but who stifled the voice of nature, probably less at the suggestions of poverty than of a wretched superstition.[26]

The most loathsome part of the story—the manner in which the body of the sacrificed captive was disposed of—remains yet to be told. It was delivered to the warrior who had taken him in battle, and by him, after being dressed, was served up in an entertainment to his friends. This was not the coarse repast of famished cannibals, but a banquet teeming with delicious beverages and delicate viands, prepared with art, and attended by both sexes, who, as we shall see hereafter, conducted themselves with all the decorum of civilized life. Surely, never were refinement and the extreme of barbarism brought so closely in contact with each other.[27]

the block and sacrificed in the usual manner. The combat was fought on a huge circular stone, before the assembled capital. Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 2, cap. 21.—Rel. d' un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 305.

[26] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 2, cap. 1, 4, 21, et alibi.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 10, cap. 10.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. pp. 76, 82.

[27] Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 7,

Human sacrifices have been practised by many nations, not excepting the most polished nations of antiquity;[28] but never by any, on a scale to be compared with those in Anahuac. The amount of victims immolated on its accursed altars would stagger the faith of the least scrupulous believer. Scarcely any author pretends to estimate the yearly sacrifices throughout the empire at less than twenty thousand, and some carry the number as high as fifty thousand![29]

cap. 19.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 3, lib. 2, cap. 17.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 2, cap. 21, et alibi.—Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 2.

[28] To say nothing of Egypt, where, notwithstanding the indications on the monuments, there is strong reason for doubting it. (Comp. Herodotus, Euterpe, sec. 45.) It was of frequent occurrence among the Greeks, as every schoolboy knows. In Rome, it was so common as to require to be interdicted by an express law, less than a hundred years before the Christian era,—a law recorded in a very honest strain of exultation by Pliny (Hist. Nat., lib. 30, sec. 3, 4); notwithstanding which, traces of the existence of the practice may be discerned to a much later period. See, among others, Horace, Epod., In Canidiam.

[29] See Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 49.—Bishop Zumárraga, in a letter written a few years after the Conquest, states that 20,000 victims were yearly slaughtered in the capital. Torquemada turns this into 20,000 *infants*. (Monarch. Ind., lib. 7, cap. 21.) Herrera, following Acosta, says 20,000 victims on a specified day of the year, throughout the kingdom. (Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 2, cap. 16.) Clavigero, more cautious, infers that this number may have been sacrificed annually throughout Anahuac. (Ubi supra.) Las Casas, however, in his reply to Sepulveda's assertion, that no one who had visited the New World put the number of yearly sacrifices at less than 20,000, declares that "this is the estimate of brigands, who wish to find an apology for their own atrocities, and that the real number was not above 50"! (Œuvres, ed. Llorente (Paris, 1822), tom. i. pp. 365, 386.) Probably the good Bishop's arithmetic here, as in most other instances, came more from his heart than his head. With such loose

On great occasions, as the coronation of a king or the consecration of a temple, the number becomes still more appalling. At the dedication of the great temple of Huitzilopochtli, in 1486, the prisoners, who for some years had been reserved for the purpose, were drawn from all quarters to the capital. They were ranged in files, forming a procession nearly two miles long. The ceremony consumed several days, and seventy thousand captives are said to have perished at the shrine of this terrible deity! But who can believe that so numerous a body would have suffered themselves to be led unresistingly like sheep to the slaughter? Or how could their remains, too great for consumption in the ordinary way, be disposed of, without breeding a pestilence in the capital? Yet the event was of recent date, and is unequivocally attested by the best-informed historians.[30] One fact may be considered certain. It was customary to preserve the skulls of the sacrificed, in buildings appropriated to the purpose. The companions of Cortés counted one hundred and

and contradictory data, it is clear that any specific number is mere conjecture, undeserving the name of calculation.

[30] I am within bounds. Torquemada states the number, most precisely, at 72,344 (Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 63); Ixtlilxochitl, with equal precision, at 80,400. (Hist. Chich., MS.) *¿Quien sabe?* The latter adds that the captives massacred in the capital, in the course of that memorable year, exceeded 100,000! (Loc. cit.) One, however, has to read but a little way, to find out that the science of numbers —at least where the party was not an eyewitness—is anything but an exact science with these ancient chroniclers. The Codex Telleriano-Remensis, written some fifty years after the Conquest, reduces the amount to 20,000. (Antiq. of Mexico, vol. i. Pl. 19; vol. vi. p. 141, Eng. note.) Even this hardly warrants the Spanish interpreter in calling king Ahuitzotl a man "of a mild and moderate disposition," *templada y benigna condicion!* Ibid., vol. v. p. 49.

thirty-six thousand in one of these edifices![31] Without attempting a precise calculation, therefore, it is safe to conclude that thousands were yearly offered up, in the different cities of Anahuac, on the bloody altars of the Mexican divinities.[32]

Indeed, the great object of war, with the Aztecs, was quite as much to gather victims for their sacrifices as to extend their empire. Hence it was that an enemy was never slain in battle, if there were a chance of taking him alive. To this circumstance the Spaniards repeatedly owed their preservation. When Montezuma was asked "why he had suffered the republic of Tlascala to maintain her independence on his borders," he replied, "that she might furnish him with victims for his gods"! As the supply began to fail, the priests, the Dominicans of the New World, bellowed aloud for more, and urged on their superstitious sovereign by the denunciations of celestial wrath. Like the militant churchmen of Christendom in the Middle Ages, they mingled themselves in the ranks, and were conspicuous in the thickest of the fight, by their hideous aspect and frantic gestures. Strange, that, in every country, the

[31] Gomara states the number on the authority of two soldiers, whose names he gives, who took the trouble to count the grinning horrors in one of these Golgothas, where they were so arranged as to produce the most hideous effect. The existence of these conservatories is attested by every writer of the time.

[32] The "Anonymous Conqueror" assures us, as a fact beyond dispute, that the Devil introduced himself into the bodies of the idols, and persuaded the silly priests that his only diet was human hearts! It furnishes a very satisfactory solution, to his mind, of the frequency of sacrifices in Mexico. Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 307.

most fiendish passions of the human heart have been those kindled in the name of religion![33]

The influence of these practices on the Aztec character was as disastrous as might have been expected. Familiarity with the bloody rites of sacrifice steeled the heart against human sympathy, and begat a thirst for carnage, like that excited in the Romans by the exhibitions of the circus. The perpetual recurrence of ceremonies, in which the people took part, associated religion with their most intimate concerns, and spread the gloom of superstition over the domestic hearth, until the character of the nation wore a grave and even melancholy aspect, which belongs to their descendants at the present day. The influence of the priesthood, of course, became unbounded. The sovereign thought himself honored by being permitted to assist in the services of the temple. Far from limiting the authority of the priests to spiritual matters, he often surrendered his opinion to theirs, where they

[33] The Tezcucan priests would fain have persuaded the good king Nezahualcoyotl, on occasion of a pestilence, to appease the gods by the sacrifice of some of his own subjects, instead of his enemies; on the ground that they would not only be obtained more easily, but would be fresher victims, and more acceptable. (Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 41.) This writer mentions a cool arrangement entered into by the allied monarchs with the republic of Tlascala and her confederates. A battle-field was marked out, on which the troops of the hostile nations were to engage at stated seasons, and thus supply themselves with subjects for sacrifice. The victorious party was not to pursue his advantage by invading the other's territory, and they were to continue, in all other respects, on the most amicable footing. (Ubi supra.) The historian, who follows in the track of the Tezcucan Chronicler, may often find occasion to shelter himself, like Ariosto, with

"Mettendolo Turpin, lo metto anch' io."

were least competent to give it. It was their opposition that prevented the final capitulation which would have saved the capital. The whole nation, from the peasant to the prince, bowed their necks to the worst kind of tyranny, that of a blind fanaticism.

In reflecting on the revolting usages recorded in the preceding pages, one finds it difficult to reconcile their existence with anything like a regular form of government, or an advance in civilization.[34] Yet the Mex-

[34] [Don José F. Ramirez, the distinguished Mexican scholar, has made this sentence the text for a disquisition of fifty pages or more, one object of which is to show that the existence of human sacrifices is not irreconcilable with an advance in civilization. This leads him into an argument of much length, covering a broad range of historical inquiry, and displaying much learning as well as a careful consideration of the subject. In one respect, however, he has been led into an important error by misunderstanding the drift of my remarks, where, speaking of cannibalism, I say, "It is impossible the people who practise it should make any great progress in moral or intellectual culture" (p. 88). This observation, referring solely to cannibalism, the critic cites as if applied by me to human sacrifices. Whatever force, therefore, his reasoning may have in respect to the latter, it cannot be admitted to apply to the former. The distance is wide between human sacrifices and cannibalism; though Señor Ramirez diminishes this distance by regarding both one and the other simply as religious exercises, springing from the devotional principle in our nature.* He enforces his views by a multitude of examples from history, which show how extensively these revolting usages of the Aztecs—on a much less gigantic scale indeed—have been practised by the primitive races of the Old World, some of whom, at a later period, made high advances in civilization. Ramirez, Notas y Escla-

* [The practice of eating, or tasting, the victim has been generally associated with sacrifice, from the idea either of the sacredness of the offering or of the deity's accepting the soul, the immaterial part, or the blood as containing the principle of life, and leaving the flesh to his worshippers.—ED.]

icans had many claims to the character of a civilized community. One may, perhaps, better understand the anomaly, by reflecting on the condition of some of the most polished countries in Europe, in the sixteenth century, after the establishment of the modern Inquisition,—an institution which yearly destroyed its thousands, by a death more painful than the Aztec sacrifices; which armed the hand of brother against brother, and, setting its burning seal upon the lip, did more to stay the march of improvement than any other scheme ever devised by human cunning.

Human sacrifice, however cruel, has nothing in it degrading to its victim. It may be rather said to ennoble him by devoting him to the gods. Although so terrible with the Aztecs, it was sometimes voluntarily embraced by them, as the most glorious death and one that opened a sure passage into paradise.[35] The Inquisition, on the other hand, branded its victims with infamy in this world, and consigned them to everlasting perdition in the next.

One detestable feature of the Aztec superstition, however, sunk it far below the Christian. This was its cannibalism; though, in truth, the Mexicans were not cannibals in the coarsest acceptation of the term. They did not feed on human flesh merely to gratify a

recimientos á la Historia del Conquista de México del Señor W. Prescott, appended to Navarro's translation.]

35 Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 307.—Among other instances is that of Chimalpopoca, third king of Mexico, who doomed himself, with a number of his lords, to this death, to wipe off an indignity offered him by a brother monarch. (Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 28.) This was the law of honor with the Aztecs.

brutish appetite, but in obedience to their religion. Their repasts were made of the victims whose blood had been poured out on the altar of sacrifice. This is a distinction worthy of notice.[36] Still, cannibalism, under any form or whatever sanction, cannot but have a fatal influence on the nation addicted to it. It suggests ideas so loathsome, so degrading to man, to his spiritual and immortal nature, that it is impossible the people who practise it should make any great progress in moral or intellectual culture. The Mexicans furnish no exception to this remark. The civilization which they possessed descended from the Toltecs, a race who never stained their altars, still less their banquets, with the blood of man.[37] All that deserved the name of science in Mexico came from this source; and the crumbling ruins of edifices attributed to them, still extant in various parts of New Spain, show a decided superiority in their architecture over that of the later

[36] Voltaire, doubtless, intends this, when he says, "Ils n'étaient point anthropophages, comme un très-petit nombre de peuplades Américaines." (Essai sur les Mœurs, chap. 147.)

[37] [The remark in the text admits of some qualification. According to an ancient Tezcucan chronicler, quoted by Señor Ramirez, the Toltecs celebrated occasionally the worship of the god Tlaloc with human sacrifices. The most important of these was the offering up once a year of five or six maidens, who were immolated in the usual horrid way of tearing out their hearts. It does not appear that the Toltecs consummated the sacrifice by devouring the flesh of the victim. This seems to have been the only exception to the blameless character of the Toltec rites. Tlaloc was the oldest deity in the Aztec mythology, in which he found a suitable place. Yet, as the knowledge of him was originally derived from the Toltecs, it cannot be denied that this people, as Ramirez says, possessed in their peculiar civilization the germs of those sanguinary institutions which existed on so appalling a scale in Mexico. See Ramirez, Notas y Esclarecimientos, ubi supra.]

races of Anahuac. It is true, the Mexicans made great proficiency in many of the social and mechanic arts, in that material culture,—if I may so call it,—the natural growth of increasing opulence, which ministers to the gratification of the senses. In purely intellectual progress they were behind the Tezcucans, whose wise sovereigns came into the abominable rites of their neighbors with reluctance and practised them on a much more moderate scale.[38]

In this state of things, it was beneficently ordered by Providence that the land should be delivered over to another race, who would rescue it from the brutish superstitions that daily extended wider and wider with extent of empire.[39] The debasing institutions of the Aztecs furnish the best apology for their conquest. It is true, the conquerors brought along with them the Inquisition. But they also brought Christianity, whose benign radiance would still survive when the fierce flames of fanaticism should be extinguished; dispelling those dark forms of horror which had so long brooded over the fair regions of Anahuac.

[38] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 45, et alibi.

[39] No doubt the ferocity of character engendered by their sanguinary rites greatly facilitated their conquests. Machiavelli attributes to a similar cause, in part, the military successes of the Romans. (Discorsi sopra T. Livio, lib. 2, cap. 2.) The same chapter contains some ingenious reflections—much more ingenious than candid—on the opposite tendencies of Christianity.

The most important authority in the preceding chapter, and, indeed, wherever the Aztec religion is concerned, is Bernardino de Sahagun, a Franciscan friar, contemporary with the Conquest. His great work, *Historia universal de Nueva-España*, has been recently printed for the first time. The circumstances attending its compila-

tion and subsequent fate form one of the most remarkable passages in literary history.

Sahagun was born in a place of the same name, in old Spain. He was educated at Salamanca, and, having taken the vows of St. Francis, came over as a missionary to Mexico in the year 1529. Here he distinguished himself by his zeal, the purity of his life, and his unwearied exertions to spread the great truths of religion among the natives. He was the guardian of several conventual houses, successively, until he relinquished these cares, that he might devote himself more unreservedly to the business of preaching, and of compiling various works designed to illustrate the antiquities of the Aztecs. For these literary labors he found some facilities in the situation which he continued to occupy, of reader, or lecturer, in the College of Santa Cruz, in the capital.

The "Universal History" was concocted in a singular manner. In order to secure to it the greatest possible authority, he passed some years in a Tezcucan town, where he conferred daily with a number of respectable natives unacquainted with Castilian. He propounded to them queries, which they, after deliberation, answered in their usual method of writing, by hieroglyphical paintings. These he submitted to other natives, who had been educated under his own eye in the College of Santa Cruz; and the latter, after a consultation among themselves, gave a written version, in the Mexican tongue, of the hieroglyphics. This process he repeated in another place, in some part of Mexico, and subjected the whole to a still further revision by a third body in another quarter. He finally arranged the combined results into a regular history, in the form it now bears; composing it in the Mexican language, which he could both write and speak with great accuracy and elegance,—greater, indeed, than any Spaniard of the time.

The work presented a mass of curious information, that attracted much attention among his brethren. But they feared its influence in keeping alive in the natives a too vivid reminiscence of the very superstitions which it was the great object of the Christian clergy to eradicate. Sahagun had views more liberal than those of his order, whose blind zeal would willingly have annihilated every monument of art and human ingenuity which had not been produced under the influence of Christianity. They refused to allow him the necessary aid to transcribe his papers, which he had been so many years in preparing, under the pretext that the expense was too great for their order to incur

This occasioned a further delay of several years. What was worse, his provincial got possession of his manuscripts, which were soon scattered among the different religious houses in the country.

In this forlorn state of his affairs, Sahagun drew up a brief statement of the nature and contents of his work, and forwarded it to Madrid. It fell into the hands of Don Juan de Ovando, president of the Council for the Indies, who was so much interested in it that he ordered the manuscripts to be restored to their author, with the request that he would at once set about translating them into Castilian. This was accordingly done. His papers were recovered, though not without the menace of ecclesiastical censures; and the octogenarian author began the work of translation from the Mexican, in which they had been originally written by him thirty years before. He had the satisfaction to complete the task, arranging the Spanish version in a parallel column with the original, and adding a vocabulary, explaining the difficult Aztec terms and phrases; while the text was supported by the numerous paintings on which it was founded. In this form, making two bulky volumes in folio, it was sent to Madrid. There seemed now to be no further reason for postponing its publication, the importance of which could not be doubted. But from this moment it disappears; and we hear nothing further of it, for more than two centuries, except only as a valuable work, which had once existed and was probably buried in some one of the numerous cemeteries of learning in which Spain abounds.

At length, towards the close of the last century, the indefatigable Muñoz succeeded in disinterring the long-lost manuscript from the place tradition had assigned to it,—the library of a convent at Tolosa, in Navarre, the northern extremity of Spain. With his usual ardor, he transcribed the whole work with his own hands, and added it to the inestimable collection, of which, alas! he was destined not to reap the full benefit himself. From this transcript Lord Kingsborough was enabled to procure the copy which was published in 1830, in the sixth volume of his magnificent compilation. In it he expresses an honest satisfaction at being the first to give Sahagun's work to the world. But in this supposition he was mistaken. The very year preceding, an edition of it, with annotations, appeared in Mexico, in three volumes octavo. It was prepared by Bustamante,—a scholar to whose editorial activity his country is largely indebted,—from a copy of the Muñoz manuscript which came into his possession. Thus this remarkable work, which was denied the honors of the press during the

author's lifetime, after passing into oblivion, reappeared, at the distance of nearly three centuries, not in his own country, but in foreign lands widely remote from each other, and that almost simultaneously. The story is extraordinary, though unhappily not so extraordinary in Spain as it would be elsewhere.

Sahagun divided his history into twelve books. The first eleven are occupied with the social institutions of Mexico, and the last with the Conquest. On the religion of the country he is particularly full. His great object evidently was, to give a clear view of its mythology, and of the burdensome ritual which belonged to it. Religion entered so intimately into the most private concerns and usages of the Aztecs, that Sahagun's work must be a text-book for every student of their antiquities. Torquemada availed himself of a manuscript copy, which fell into his hands before it was sent to Spain, to enrich his own pages, —a circumstance more fortunate for his readers than for Sahagun's reputation, whose work, now that it is published, loses much of the originality and interest which would otherwise attach to it. In one respect it is invaluable; as presenting a complete collection of the various forms of prayer, accommodated to every possible emergency, in use by the Mexicans. They are often clothed in dignified and beautiful language, showing that sublime speculative tenets are quite compatible with the most degrading practices of superstition. It is much to be regretted that we have not the eighteen hymns inserted by the author in his book, which would have particular interest, as the only specimen of devotional poetry preserved of the Aztecs. The hieroglyphical paintings, which accompanied the text, are also missing. If they have escaped the hands of fanaticism, both may reappear at some future day.

Sahagun produced several other works, of a religious or philological character. Some of these were voluminous, but none have been printed. He lived to a very advanced age, closing a life of activity and usefulness, in 1590, in the capital of Mexico. His remains were followed to the tomb by a numerous concourse of his own countrymen, and of the natives, who lamented in him the loss of unaffected piety, benevolence, and learning.

CHAPTER IV.

MEXICAN HIEROGLYPHICS. — MANUSCRIPTS. — ARITHMETIC. — CHRONOLOGY. — ASTRONOMY.

It is a relief to turn from the gloomy pages of the preceding chapter to a brighter side of the picture, and to contemplate the same nation in its generous struggle to raise itself from a state of barbarism and to take a positive rank in the scale of civilization. It is not the less interesting, that these efforts were made on an entirely new theatre of action, apart from those influences that operate in the Old World ; the inhabitants of which, forming one great brotherhood of nations, are knit together by sympathies that make the faintest spark of knowledge, struck out in one quarter, spread gradually wider and wider, until it has diffused a cheering light over the remotest. It is curious to observe the human mind, in this new position, conforming to the same laws as on the ancient continent, and taking a similar direction in its first inquiries after truth,—so similar, indeed, as, although not warranting, perhaps, the idea of imitation, to suggest at least that of a common origin.

In the Eastern hemisphere we find some nations, as the Greeks, for instance, early smitten with such a love of the beautiful as to be unwilling to dispense with it even in the graver productions of science ; and other nations, again, proposing a severer end to themselves,

to which even imagination and elegant art were made subservient. The productions of such a people must be criticised, not by the ordinary rules of taste, but by their adaptation to the peculiar end for which they were designed. Such were the Egyptians in the Old World,[1] and the Mexicans in the New. We have already had occasion to notice the resemblance borne by the latter nation to the former in their religious economy. We shall be more struck with it in their scientific culture, especially their hieroglyphical writing and their astronomy.

To describe actions and events by delineating visible objects seems to be a natural suggestion, and is practised, after a certain fashion, by the rudest savages. The North American Indian carves an arrow on the bark of trees to show his followers the direction of his march, and some other sign to show the success of his expeditions. But to paint intelligibly a consecutive series of these actions—forming what Warburton has happily called *picture-writing*[2]—requires a combination of ideas that amounts to a positively intellectual effort. Yet further, when the object of the painter, instead of being limited

[1] "An Egyptian temple," says Denon, strikingly, "is an open volume, in which the teachings of science, morality, and the arts are recorded. Every thing seems to speak one and the same language, and breathes one and the same spirit." The passage is cited by Heeren, Hist. Res., vol. v. p. 178.

[2] Divine Legation, ap. Works (London, 1811), vol. iv. b. 4, sec. 4. —The Bishop of Gloucester, in his comparison of the various hieroglyphical systems of the world, shows his characteristic sagacity and boldness by announcing opinions little credited then, though since established. He affirmed the existence of an Egyptian alphabet, but was not aware of the phonetic property of hieroglyphics,—the great literary discovery of our age.

to the present, is to penetrate the past, and to gather from its dark recesses lessons of instruction for coming generations, we see the dawnings of a literary culture, and recognize the proof of a decided civilization in the attempt itself, however imperfectly it may be executed. The literal imitation of objects will not answer for this more complex and extended plan. It would occupy too much space, as well as time in the execution. It then becomes necessary to abridge the pictures, to confine the drawing to outlines, or to such prominent parts of the bodies delineated as may readily suggest the whole. This is the *representative* or *figurative* writing, which forms the lowest stage of hieroglyphics.

But there are things which have no type in the material world; abstract ideas, which can only be represented by visible objects supposed to have some quality analogous to the idea intended. This constitutes *symbolical* writing, the most difficult of all to the interpreter, since the analogy between the material and immaterial object is often purely fanciful, or local in its application. Who, for instance, could suspect the association which made a beetle represent the universe, as with the Egyptians, or a serpent typify time, as with the Aztecs?

The third and last division is the *phonetic*, in which signs are made to represent sounds, either entire words, or parts of them. This is the nearest approach of the hieroglyphical series to that beautiful invention, the alphabet, by which language is resolved into its elementary sounds, and an apparatus supplied for easily and accurately expressing the most delicate shades of thought.

The Egyptians were well skilled in all three kinds of hieroglyphics. But, although their public monuments display the first class, in their ordinary intercourse and written records it is now certain that they almost wholly relied on the phonetic character. Strange that, having thus broken down the thin partition which divided them from an alphabet, their latest monuments should exhibit no nearer approach to it than their earliest.[3] The Aztecs, also, were acquainted with the several varieties of hieroglyphics. But they relied on the figurative infinitely more than on the others. The Egyptians were at the top of the scale, the Aztecs at the bottom.

In casting the eye over a Mexican manuscript, or map, as it is called, one is struck with the grotesque caricatures it exhibits of the human figure; monstrous, overgrown heads, on puny, misshapen bodies, which are themselves hard and angular in their outlines, and without the least skill in composition. On closer inspection, however, it is obvious that it is not so much a rude attempt to delineate nature, as a conventional symbol, to express the idea in the most clear and forcible manner; in the same way as the pieces

[3] It appears that the hieroglyphics on the most recent monuments of Egypt contain no larger infusion of phonetic characters than those which existed eighteen centuries before Christ; showing no advance, in this respect, for twenty-two hundred years! (See Champollion, Précis du Système hiéroglyphique des anciens Égyptiens (Paris, 1824), pp. 242, 281.) It may seem more strange that the enchorial alphabet, so much more commodious, should not have been substituted. But the Egyptians were familiar with their hieroglyphics from infancy, which, moreover, took the fancies of the most illiterate, probably in the same manner as our children are attracted and taught by the picture-alphabets in an ordinary spelling-book.

of similar value on a chess-board, while they correspond with one another in form, bear little resemblance, usually, to the objects they represent. Those parts of the figure are most distinctly traced which are the most important. So, also, the coloring, instead of the delicate gradations of nature, exhibits only gaudy and violent contrasts, such as may produce the most vivid impression. "For even colors," as Gama observes, "speak in the Aztec hieroglyphics."[4]

But in the execution of all this the Mexicans were much inferior to the Egyptians. The drawings of the latter, indeed, are exceedingly defective, when criticised by the rules of art; for they were as ignorant of perspective as the Chinese, and only exhibited the head in profile, with the eye in the centre, and with total absence of expression. But they handled the pencil more gracefully than the Aztecs, were more true to the natural forms of objects, and, above all, showed great superiority in abridging the original figure by giving only the outline, or some characteristic or essential feature. This simplified the process, and facilitated the communication of thought. An Egyptian text has almost the appearance of alphabetical writing in its regular lines of minute figures. A Mexican text looks usually like a collection of pictures, each one forming the subject of a separate study. This is particularly the case with the delineations of mythology; in which the story is told by a conglomeration of symbols, that may remind one more of the mys-

[4] Descripcion histórica y cronológica de las Dos Piedras (México, 1832), Parte 2, p. 39.

terious anaglyphs sculptured on the temples of the Egyptians, than of their written records.

The Aztecs had various emblems for expressing such things as, from their nature, could not be directly represented by the painter; as, for example, the years, months, days, the seasons, the elements, the heavens, and the like. A "tongue" denoted speaking; a "footprint," travelling; a "man sitting on the ground," an earthquake. These symbols were often very arbitrary, varying with the caprice of the writer; and it requires a nice discrimination to interpret them, as a slight change in the form or position of the figure intimated a very different meaning.[5] An ingenious writer asserts that the priests devised secret symbolic characters for the record of their religious mysteries. It is possible. But the researches of Champollion lead to the conclusion that the similar opinion formerly entertained respecting the Egyptian hieroglyphics is without foundation.[6]

Lastly, they employed, as above stated, phonetic

5 Gama, Descripcion, Parte 2, pp. 32, 44.—Acosta, lib. 6, cap. 7.—The continuation of Gama's work, recently edited by Bustamante, in Mexico, contains, among other things, some interesting remarks on the Aztec hieroglyphics. The editor has rendered a good service by this further publication of the writings of this estimable scholar, who has done more than any of his countrymen to explain the mysteries of Aztec science.

6 Gama, Descripcion, Parte 2, p. 32.—Warburton, with his usual penetration, rejects the idea of mystery in the figurative hieroglyphics. (Divine Legation, b. 4, sec. 4.) If there was any mystery reserved for the initiated, Champollion thinks it may have been the system of the anaglyphs. (Précis, p. 360.) Why may not this be true, likewise, of the monstrous symbolical combinations which represented the Mexican deities?

signs, though these were chiefly confined to the names of persons and places; which, being derived from some circumstance or characteristic quality, were accommodated to the hieroglyphical system. Thus, the town *Cimatlan* was compounded of *cimatl*, a "root," which grew near it, and *tlan*, signifying "near;" *Tlaxcallan* meant "the place of bread," from its rich fields of corn; *Huexotzinco*, "a place surrounded by willows." The names of persons were often significant of their adventures and achievements. That of the great Tezcucan prince Nezahualcoyotl signified "hungry fox," intimating his sagacity, and his distresses in early life.[7] The emblems of such names were no sooner seen, than they suggested to every Mexican the person and place intended, and, when painted on their shields or embroidered on their banners, became the armorial bearings by which city and chieftain were distinguished, as in Europe in the age of chivalry.[8]

But, although the Aztecs were instructed in all the varieties of hieroglyphical painting, they chiefly resorted to the clumsy method of direct representation. Had their empire lasted, like the Egyptian, several thousand years, instead of the brief space of two hundred, they would doubtless, like them, have advanced

[7] Boturini, Idea, pp. 77–83.—Gama, Descripcion, Parte 2, pp. 34–43.—Heeren is not aware, or does not allow, that the Mexicans used phonetic characters of any kind. (Hist. Res., vol. v. p. 45.) They, indeed, reversed the usual order of proceeding, and, instead of adapting the hieroglyphic to the name of the object, accommodated the name of the object to the hieroglyphic. This, of course, could not admit of great extension. We find phonetic characters, however, applied in some instances to common as well as proper names.

[8] Boturini, Idea, ubi supra.

to the more frequent use of the phonetic writing. But, before they could be made acquainted with the capabilities of their own system, the Spanish Conquest, by introducing the European alphabet, supplied their scholars with a more perfect contrivance for expressing thought, which soon supplanted the ancient pictorial character.[9]

Clumsy as it was, however, the Aztec picture-writing seems to have been adequate to the demands of the nation, in their imperfect state of civilization. By means of it were recorded all their laws, and even their regulations for domestic economy; their tribute-rolls, specifying the imposts of the various towns; their mythology, calendars, and rituals; their political annals, carried back to a period long before the foundation of the city. They digested a complete system of chronology, and could specify with accuracy the dates of the most important events in their history; the year being inscribed on the margin, against the particular circumstance recorded. It is true, history, thus executed, must necessarily be vague and fragmentary. Only a few leading incidents could be presented. But in this it did not differ much from the monkish chronicles of the dark ages, which often dispose of years in a few brief sentences,—quite long enough for the annals of barbarians.[10]

[9] Clavigero has given a catalogue of the Mexican historians of the sixteenth century,—some of whom are often cited in this history,—which bears honorable testimony to the literary ardor and intelligence of the native races. Stor. del Messico, tom. i., Pref.—Also, Gama, Descripcion, Parte 1, passim.

[10] M. de Humboldt's remark, that the Aztec annals, from the close of the eleventh century, "exhibit the greatest method and astonish-

In order to estimate aright the picture-writing of the Aztecs, one must regard it in connection with oral tradition, to which it was auxiliary. In the colleges of the priests the youth were instructed in astronomy, history, mythology, etc.; and those who were to follow the profession of hieroglyphical painting were taught the application of the characters appropriated to each of these branches. In an historical work, one had charge of the chronology, another of the events. Every part of the labor was thus mechanically distributed.[11] The pupils, instructed in all that was before known in their several departments, were prepared to extend still further the boundaries of their imperfect science. The hieroglyphics served as a sort of stenography, a collection of notes, suggesting to the initiated

ing minuteness" (Vues des Cordillères, p. 137), must be received with some qualification. The reader would scarcely understand from it that there are rarely more than one or two facts recorded in any year, and sometimes not one in a dozen or more. The necessary looseness and uncertainty of these historical records are made apparent by the remarks of the Spanish interpreter of the Mendoza Codex, who tells us that the natives, to whom it was submitted, were very long in coming to an agreement about the proper signification of the paintings. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi. p. 87.

[11] Gama, Descripcion, Parte 2, p. 30.—Acosta, lib. 6, cap. 7.—"Tenian para cada género," says Ixtlilxochitl, "sus Escritores, unos que trataban de los Anales, poniendo por su órden las cosas que acaecian en cada un año, con dia, mes, y hora; otros tenian á su cargo las Genealogías, y descendencia de los Reyes, Señores, y Personas de linaje, asentando por cuenta y razon los que nacian, y borraban los que morian con la misma cuenta. Unos tenian cuidado de las pinturas, de los términos, límites, y mojoneras de las Ciudades, Provincias, Pueblos, y Lugares, y de las suertes, y repartimiento de las tierras cuyas eran, y á quien pertenecian; otros de los libros de Leyes, ritos, y ceremonias que usaban." Hist. Chich., MS., Prólogo.

much more than could be conveyed by a literal interpretation. This combination of the written and the oral comprehended what may be called the literature of the Aztecs.[12]

Their manuscripts were made of different materials,—of cotton cloth, or skins nicely prepared; of a composition of silk and gum; but, for the most part, of a fine fabric from the leaves of the aloe, *agave Americana*, called by the natives *maguey*, which grows luxuriantly over the table-lands of Mexico. A sort of paper was made from it, resembling somewhat the Egyptian *papyrus*,[13] which, when properly dressed and polished, is said to have been more soft and beautiful than parchment. Some of the specimens, still existing, exhibit their original freshness, and the paintings on

[12] According to Boturini, the ancient Mexicans were acquainted with the Peruvian method of recording events by means of the *quippus*,—knotted strings of various colors,—which were afterwards superseded by hieroglyphical painting. (Idea, p. 86.) He could discover, however, but a single specimen, which he met with in Tlascala, and that had nearly fallen to pieces with age. McCulloh suggests that it may have been only a wampum belt, such as is common among our North American Indians. (Researches, p. 201.) The conjecture is plausible enough. Strings of wampum, of various colors, were used by the latter people for the similar purpose of registering events. The insulated fact, recorded by Boturini, is hardly sufficient—unsupported, so far as I know, by any other testimony—to establish the existence of *quippus* among the Aztecs, who had but little in common with the Peruvians.

[13] Pliny, who gives a minute account of the *papyrus* reed of Egypt, notices the various manufactures obtained from it, as ropes, cloth, paper, etc. It also served as a thatch for the roofs of houses, and as food and drink for the natives. (Hist. Nat., lib. 11, cap. 20–22.) It is singular that the American *agave*, a plant so totally different, should also have been applied to all these various uses.

them retain their brilliancy of colors. They were sometimes done up into rolls, but more frequently into volumes, of moderate size, in which the paper was shut up, like a folding screen, with a leaf or tablet of wood at each extremity, that gave the whole, when closed, the appearance of a book. The length of the strips was determined only by convenience. As the pages might be read and referred to separately, this form had obvious advantages over the rolls of the ancients.[14]

At the time of the arrival of the Spaniards, great quantities of these manuscripts were treasured up in the country. Numerous persons were employed in painting, and the dexterity of their operations excited the astonishment of the Conquerors. Unfortunately, this was mingled with other and unworthy feelings. The strange, unknown characters inscribed on them excited suspicion. They were looked on as magic scrolls, and were regarded in the same light with the idols and temples, as the symbols of a pestilent superstition, that must be extirpated. The first archbishop of Mexico, Don Juan de Zumárraga,—a name that should be as immortal as that of Omar,—collected

[14] Lorenzana, Hist. de Nueva-España, p. 8.—Boturini, Idea, p. 96.—Humboldt, Vues des Cordillères, p. 52.—Peter Martyr Anglerius, De Orbe Novo (Compluti, 1530), dec. 3, cap. 8; dec. 5, cap. 10.—Martyr has given a minute description of the Indian maps sent home soon after the invasion of New Spain. His inquisitive mind was struck with the evidence they afforded of a positive civilization. Ribera, the friend of Cortés, brought back a story that the paintings were designed as patterns for embroiderers and jewellers. But Martyr had been in Egypt, and he felt little hesitation in placing the Indian drawings in the same class with those he had seen on the obelisks and temples of that country.

these paintings from every quarter, especially from Tezcuco, the most cultivated capital in Anahuac, and the great depository of the national archives. He then caused them to be piled up in a "mountain-heap"—as it is called by the Spanish writers themselves—in the market-place of Tlatelolco, and reduced them all to ashes![15] His greater countryman, Archbishop Ximenes, had celebrated a similar *auto-da-fe* of Arabic manuscripts, in Granada, some twenty years before. Never did fanaticism achieve two more signal triumphs than by the annihilation of so many curious monuments of human ingenuity and learning![16]

The unlettered soldiers were not slow in imitating the example of their prelate. Every chart and volume which fell into their hands was wantonly destroyed; so that, when the scholars of a later and more enlightened age anxiously sought to recover some of these memorials of civilization, nearly all had perished, and the few surviving were jealously hidden by the

[15] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., Prólogo.—Idem, Sum. Relac., MS.—["The name of Zumárraga," says Señor Alaman, "has other and very different titles to immortality from that mentioned by Mr. Prescott,—titles founded on his virtues and apostolic labors, especially on the fervid zeal with which he defended the natives and the manifold benefits he secured to them. The loss that history suffered by the destruction of the Indian manuscripts by the missionaries has been in a great measure repaired by the writings of the missionaries themselves." Conquista de Méjico (trad. de Vega), tom. i. p. 60.]—Writers are not agreed whether the conflagration took place in the square of Tlatelolco or Tezcuco. Comp. Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 188, and Bustamante's Pref. to Ixtlilxochitl, Cruautés des Conquérans, trad. de Ternaux, p. xvii.

[16] It has been my lot to record both these displays of human infirmity, so humbling to the pride of intellect. See the History of Ferdinand and Isabella, Part 2, chap. 6.

natives.[17] Through the indefatigable labors of a private individual, however, a considerable collection was eventually deposited in the archives of Mexico, but was so little heeded there that some were plundered, others decayed piecemeal from the damps and mildews, and others, again, were used up as waste paper![18] We contemplate with indignation the cruelties inflicted by the early conquerors. But indignation is qualified with contempt when we see them thus ruthlessly trampling out the spark of knowledge, the common boon and property of all mankind. We may well doubt which has the stronger claim to civilization, the victor or the vanquished.

A few of the Mexican manuscripts have found their way, from time to time, to Europe, and are carefully preserved in the public libraries of its capitals. They are brought together in the magnificent work of Lord Kingsborough; but not one is there from Spain. The most important of them, for the light it throws on the Aztec institutions, is the Mendoza Codex; which, after its mysterious disappearance for more than a century, has at length reappeared in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. It has been several times engraved.[19] The

[17] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 10, cap. 27.—Bustamante, Mañanas de Alameda (México, 1836), tom. ii., Prólogo.

[18] Very many of the documents thus painfully amassed in the archives of the Audience of Mexico were sold, according to Bustamante, as wrapping-paper, to apothecaries, shopkeepers, and rocket-makers! Boturini's noble collection has not fared much better.

[19] The history of this famous collection is familiar to scholars. It was sent to the Emperor Charles the Fifth, not long after the Conquest, by the viceroy Mendoza, Marques de Mondejar. The vessel fell into the hands of a French cruiser, and the manuscript was taken to Paris. It was afterwards bought by the chaplain of the English

most brilliant in coloring, probably, is the Borgian collection, in Rome.[20] The most curious, however, is

embassy, and, coming into the possession of the antiquary Purchas, was engraved, *in extenso*, by him, in the third volume of his "Pilgrimage." After its publication, in 1625, the Aztec original lost its importance, and fell into oblivion so completely that, when at length the public curiosity was excited in regard to its fate, no trace of it could be discovered. Many were the speculations of scholars, at home and abroad, respecting it, and Dr. Robertson settled the question as to its existence in England, by declaring that there was no Mexican relic in that country, except a golden goblet of Montezuma. (History of America (London, 1796), vol. iii. p. 370.) Nevertheless, the identical Codex, and several other Mexican paintings, have been since discovered in the Bodleian Library. The circumstance has brought some obloquy on the historian, who, while prying into the collections of Vienna and the Escorial, could be so blind to those under his own eyes. The oversight will not appear so extraordinary to a thorough-bred collector, whether of manuscripts, or medals, or any other rarity. The Mendoza Codex is, after all, but a copy, coarsely done with a pen on European paper. Another copy, from which Archbishop Lorenzana engraved his tribute-rolls in Mexico, existed in Boturini's collection. A third is in the Escorial, according to the Marquis of Spineto. (Lectures on the Elements of Hieroglyphics (London), Lect. 7.) This may possibly be the original painting. The entire Codex, copied from the Bodleian maps, with its Spanish and English interpretations, is included in the noble compilation of Lord Kingsborough. (Vols. i., v., vi.) It is distributed into three parts, embracing the civil history of the nation, the tributes paid by the cities, and the domestic economy and discipline of the Mexicans, and, from the fulness of the interpretation, is of much importance in regard to these several topics.

[20] It formerly belonged to the Giustiniani family, but was so little cared for that it was suffered to fall into the mischievous hands of the domestics' children, who made sundry attempts to burn it. Fortunately, it was painted on deerskin, and, though somewhat singed, was not destroyed. (Humboldt, Vues des Cordillères, p. 89, et seq.) It is impossible to cast the eye over this brilliant assemblage of forms and colors without feeling how hopeless must be the attempt to recover a key to the Aztec mythological symbols; which are here distributed

the Dresden Codex, which has excited less attention than it deserves. Although usually classed among Mexican manuscripts, it bears little resemblance to them in its execution; the figures of objects are more delicately drawn, and the characters, unlike the Mexican, appear to be purely arbitrary, and are possibly phonetic.[21] Their regular arrangement is quite equal to the Egyptian. The whole infers a much higher civilization than the Aztec, and offers abundant food for curious speculation.[22]

with the symmetry, indeed, but in all the endless combinations, of the kaleidoscope. It is in the third volume of Lord Kingsborough's work.

[21] Humboldt, who has copied some pages of it in his "Atlas pittoresque," intimates no doubt of its Aztec origin. (Vues des Cordillères, pp. 266, 267.) M. Le Noir even reads in it an exposition of Mexican Mythology, with occasional analogies to that of Egypt and of Hindostan. (Antiquités Mexicaines, tom. ii., Introd.) The fantastic forms of hieroglyphic symbols may afford analogies for almost anything.

[22] The history of this Codex, engraved entire in the third volume of the "Antiquities of Mexico," goes no further back than 1739, when it was purchased at Vienna for the Dresden Library. It is made of the American *agave*. The figures painted on it bear little resemblance, either in feature or form, to the Mexican. They are surmounted by a sort of head-gear, which looks something like a modern peruke. On the chin of one we may notice a beard, a sign often used after the Conquest to denote a European. Many of the persons are sitting cross-legged. The profiles of the faces, and the whole contour of the limbs, are sketched with a spirit and freedom very unlike the hard, angular outlines of the Aztecs. The characters, also, are delicately traced, generally in an irregular but circular form, and are very minute. They are arranged, like the Egyptian, both horizontally and perpendicularly, mostly in the former manner, and, from the prevalent direction of the profiles, would seem to have been read from right to left. Whether phonetic or ideographic, they are of that compact and purely conventional sort which belongs to a well-digested system for the communication of thought. One cannot but regret that no trace should exist of the quarter whence this MS. was

Some few of these maps have interpretations annexed to them, which were obtained from the natives after the Conquest.[23] The greater part are without any, and cannot now be unriddled. Had the Mexicans made free use of a phonetic alphabet, it might have been originally easy, by mastering the comparatively few signs employed in this kind of communication, to have got a permanent key to the whole.[24] A brief

obtained; perhaps some part of Central America, from the region of the mysterious races who built the monuments of Mitla and Palenque; though, in truth, there seems scarcely more resemblance in the symbols to the Palenque *bas-reliefs* than to the Aztec paintings.*

[23] There are three of these: the Mendoza Codex; the Telleriano-Remensis,—formerly the property of Archbishop Tellier,—in the Royal Library of Paris; and the Vatican MS., No. 3738. The interpretation of the last bears evident marks of its recent origin; probably as late as the close of the sixteenth or the beginning of the seventeenth century, when the ancient hieroglyphics were read with the eye of faith rather than of reason. Whoever was the commentator (comp. Vues des Cordillères, pp. 203, 204; and Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi. pp. 155, 222), he has given such an exposition as shows the old Aztecs to have been as orthodox Christians as any subjects of the Pope.

[24] The total number of Egyptian hieroglyphics discovered by Champollion amounts to 864; and of these 130 only are phonetic, notwithstanding that this kind of character is used far more frequently than both the others. Précis, p. 263;—also Spineto, Lectures, Lect. 3.

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* [Mr. Stephens, who, like Humboldt, considered the Dresden Codex a Mexican manuscript, compared the characters of it with those on the altar of Copan, and drew the conclusion that the inhabitants of that place and of Palenque must have spoken the same language as the Aztecs. Prescott's opinion has, however, been confirmed by later critics, who have shown that the hieroglyphics of the Dresden Codex are quite different from those at Copan and Palenque, while the Mexican writing bears not the least resemblance to either. See Orozco y Berra, Geografía de las Lenguas de México, p. 101. — ED.]

inscription has furnished a clue to the vast labyrinth of Egyptian hieroglyphics. But the Aztec characters, representing individuals, or, at most, species, require to be made out separately; a hopeless task, for which little aid is to be expected from the vague and general tenor of the few interpretations now existing. There was, as already mentioned, until late in the last century, a professor in the University of Mexico, especially devoted to the study of the national picture-writing. But, as this was with a view to legal proceedings, his information, probably, was limited to deciphering titles. In less than a hundred years after the Conquest, the knowledge of the hieroglyphics had so far declined that a diligent Tezcucan writer complains he could find in the country only two persons, both very aged, at all competent to interpret them.[25]

It is not probable, therefore, that the art of reading these picture-writings will ever be recovered; a circumstance certainly to be regretted. Not that the records of a semi-civilized people would be likely to contain any new truth or discovery important to human comfort or progress; but they could scarcely fail to throw some additional light on the previous history of

[25] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., Dedic.—Boturini, who travelled through every part of the country in the middle of the last century, could not meet with an individual who could afford him the least clue to the Aztec hieroglyphics. So completely had every vestige of their ancient language been swept away from the memory of the natives. (Idea, p. 116.) If we are to believe Bustamante, however, a complete key to the whole system is, at this moment, *somewhere* in Spain. It was carried home, at the time of the process against Father Mier, in 1795. The name of the Mexican Champollion who discovered it is Borunda. Gama, Descripcion, tom. ii. p. 33, nota.

the nation, and that of the more polished people who before occupied the country. This would be still more probable, if any literary relics of their Toltec predecessors were preserved; and, if report be true, an important compilation from this source was extant at the time of the invasion, and may have perhaps contributed to swell the holocaust of Zumárraga.[26] It is no great stretch of fancy to suppose that such records might reveal the successive links in the mighty chain of migration of the primitive races, and, by carrying us back to the seat of their possessions in the Old

[26] *Teoamoxtli*, "the divine book," as it was called. According to Ixtlilxochitl, it was composed by a Tezcucan doctor, named Huematzin, towards the close of the seventeenth century. (Relaciones, MS.) It gave an account of the migrations of his nation from Asia, of the various stations on their journey, of their social and religious institutions, their science, arts, etc., etc., a good deal too much for one book. *Ignotum pro mirifico.* It has never been seen by a European.* A copy is said to have been in possession of the Tezcucan chroniclers on the taking of their capital. (Bustamante, Crónica Mexicana (México, 1822), carta 3.) Lord Kingsborough, who can scent out a Hebrew root be it buried never so deep, has discovered that the *Teoamoxtli* was the Pentateuch. Thus, *teo* means "divine," *amotl*, "paper" or "book," and *moxtli* "*appears* to be Moses;"—"Divine Book of Moses"! Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi. p. 204, nota.

* [It must have been seen by many Europeans, if we accept either the statement of the Baron de Waldeck, in 1838 (Voyage pittoresque et archéologique dans la Province d'Yucatan), that it was then in his possession, or the theories of Brasseur de Bourbourg, who identifies it with the Dresden Codex and certain other hieroglyphical manuscripts, and who believes himself to have found the key to it, and consequently to the origin of the Mexican history and civilization, in one of the documents in Boturini's collection, to which he has given the name of the Codex Chimalpopoca. Quatre Lettres sur le Mexique (Paris, 1868).—ED.]

World, have solved the mystery which has so long perplexed the learned, in regard to the settlement and civilization of the New.*

Besides the hieroglyphical maps, the traditions of the country were embodied in the songs and hymns, which, as already mentioned, were carefully taught in the public schools. These were various, embracing the mythic legends of a heroic age, the warlike achievements of their own, or the softer tales of love and pleasure.[27] Many of them were composed by scholars and persons of rank, and are cited as affording the most authentic record of events.[28] The Mexican dialect was rich and expressive, though inferior to the Tezcucan, the most polished of the idioms of Anahuac.

[27] Boturini, Idea, pp. 90–97.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. pp. 174–178.

[28] "Los cantos con que las observaban Autores muy graves en su modo de ciencia y facultad, pues fuéron los mismos Reyes, y de la gente mas ilustre y entendida, que siempre observáron y adquiriéron la verdad, y esta con tanta razon, quanta pudiéron tener los mas graves y fidedignos Autores." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., Prologo.

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* [Such a supposition would require a "stretch of fancy" greater than any which the mind of the mere historical inquirer is capable of taking. To admit the probability of the Asiatic origin of the American races, and of the indefinite antiquity of the Mexican civilization, is something very different from believing that this civilization, already developed in the degree required for the existence and preservation of its own records during so long a period and so great a migration, can have been transplanted from the one continent to the other. It would be easier to accept the theory, now generally abandoned, that the original settlers owed their civilization to a body of colonists from Phœnicia. In view of so hazardous a conjecture, it is difficult to understand why Buschmann has taken exception to the "sharp criticism" to which Prescott has subjected the sources of Mexican history, and his "low estimate of their value and credibility."—ED.]

None of the Aztec compositions have survived, but we can form some estimate of the general state of poetic culture from the odes which have come down to us from the royal house of Tezcuco.[29] Sahagun has furnished us with translations of their more elaborate prose, consisting of prayers and public discourses, which give a favorable idea of their eloquence, and show that they paid much attention to rhetorical effect. They are said to have had, also, something like theatrical exhibitions, of a pantomimic sort, in which the faces of the performers were covered with masks, and the figures of birds or animals were frequently represented; an imitation to which they may have been led by the familiar delineation of such objects in their hieroglyphics.[30] In all this we see the dawning of a literary culture, surpassed, however, by their attainments in the severer walks of mathematical science.

They devised a system of notation in their arithmetic sufficiently simple. The first twenty numbers were expressed by a corresponding number of dots. The first five had specific names; after which they were represented by combining the fifth with one of the four preceding; as five and one for six, five and two for seven, and so on. Ten and fifteen had each a separate name, which was also combined with the first four, to express a higher quantity. These four, therefore, were the radical characters of their oral arithmetic, in

[29] See chap. 6 of this Introduction.

[30] See some account of these mummeries in Acosta (lib. 5, cap. 30), —also Clavigero (Stor. del Messico, ubi supra). Stone models of masks are sometimes found among the Indian ruins, and engravings of them are both in Lord Kingsborough's work and in the Antiquités Mexicaines.

the same manner as they were of the written with the ancient Romans; a more simple arrangement, probably, than any existing among Europeans.[31] Twenty was expressed by a separate hieroglyphic,—a flag. Larger sums were reckoned by twenties, and, in writing, by repeating the number of flags. The square of twenty, four hundred, had a separate sign, that of a plume, and so had the cube of twenty, or eight thousand, which was denoted by a purse, or sack. This was the whole arithmetical apparatus of the Mexicans, by the combination of which they were enabled to indicate any quantity. For greater expedition, they used to denote fractions of the larger sums by drawing only a part of the object. Thus, half or three-fourths of a plume, or of a purse, represented that proportion of their respective sums, and so on.[32] With all this, the machinery will appear very awkward to us, who perform our operations with so much ease by means of the Arabic or, rather, Indian ciphers. It is not much more awkward, however, than the system pursued by the great mathematicians of antiquity, unacquainted with the brilliant invention, which has given a new aspect to mathematical science, of determining the value, in a great measure, by the relative position of the figures.

In the measurement of time, the Aztecs adjusted their civil year by the solar. They divided it into

[31] Gama, Descripcion, Parte 2, Apend. 2.—Gama, in comparing the language of Mexican notation with the decimal system of the Europeans and the ingenious binary system of Leibnitz, confounds oral with written arithmetic.

[32] Ibid., ubi supra.—This learned Mexican has given a very satisfactory treatise on the arithmetic of the Aztecs, in his second part.

eighteen months of twenty days each. Both months and days were expressed by peculiar hieroglyphics,—those of the former often intimating the season of the year, like the French months at the period of the Revolution. Five complementary days, as in Egypt,[33] were added, to make up the full number of three hundred and sixty-five. They belonged to no month, and were regarded as peculiarly unlucky. A month was divided into four weeks, of five days each, on the last of which was the public fair, or market-day.[34] This arrangement, differing from that of the nations of the Old Continent, whether of Europe or Asia,[35] has the advantage of giving an equal number of days to each month, and of comprehending entire weeks, without a fraction, both in the months and in the year.[36]

As the year is composed of nearly six hours more than three hundred and sixty-five days, there still remained an excess, which, like other nations who have framed a calendar, they provided for by intercalation; not,

33 Herodotus, Euterpe, sec. 4.

34 Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 4, Apend.—According to Clavigero, the fairs were held on the days bearing the sign of the year. Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 62.

35 The people of Java, according to Sir Stamford Raffles, regulated their markets, also, by a week of five days. They had, besides, our week of seven. (History of Java (London, 1830), vol. i. pp. 531, 532.) The latter division of time, of general use throughout the East, is the oldest monument existing of astronomical science. See La Place, Exposition du Système du Monde (Paris, 1808), lib. 5, chap. 1.

36 Veytia, Historia antigua de Méjico (Méjico, 1806), tom. i. cap. 6, 7.—Gama, Descripcion, Parte 1, pp. 33, 34, et alibi.—Boturini, Idea, pp. 4, 44, et seq.—Cod. Tel.-Rem., ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi. p. 104.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 5.

indeed, every fourth year, as the Europeans,[37] but at longer intervals, like some of the Asiatics.[38] They waited till the expiration of fifty-two vague years, when they interposed thirteen days, or rather twelve and a half, this being the number which had fallen in arrear. Had they inserted thirteen, it would have been too much, since the annual excess over three hundred and sixty-five is about eleven minutes less than six hours. But, as their calendar at the time of the Conquest was found to correspond with the European (making allowance for the subsequent Gregorian reform), they would seem to have adopted the shorter period of twelve days and a half,[39] which brought them, within an almost

37 Sahagun intimates doubts of this. "They celebrated another feast every four years in honor of the elements of fire, and it is probable and has been conjectured that it was on these occasions that they made their intercalation, counting six days of *nemontemi*," as the unlucky complementary days were called. (Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 4, Apend.) But this author, however good an authority for the superstitions, is an indifferent one for the science of the Mexicans.

38 The Persians had a cycle of one hundred and twenty years, of three hundred and sixty-five days each, at the end of which they intercalated thirty days. (Humboldt, Vues des Cordillères, p. 177.) This was the same as thirteen after the cycle of fifty-two years of the Mexicans, but was less accurate than their probable intercalation of twelve days and a half. It is obviously indifferent, as far as accuracy is concerned, which multiple of four is selected to form the cycle; though, the shorter the interval of intercalation, the less, of course, will be the temporary departure from the true time.

39 This is the conclusion to which Gama arrives, after a very careful investigation of the subject. He supposes that the "bundles," or cycles, of fifty-two years—by which, as we shall see, the Mexicans computed time—ended alternately at midnight and midday. (Descripcion, Parte 1, p. 52, et seq.) He finds some warrant for this in Acosta's account (lib. 6, cap. 2), though contradicted by Torquemada (Monarch. Ind., lib. 5, cap. 33), and, as it appears, by Sahagun,—

inappreciable fraction, to the exact length of the tropical year, as established by the most accurate observations.[40] Indeed, the intercalation of twenty-five days in every hundred and four years shows a nicer adjustment of civil to solar time than is presented by any European calendar; since more than five centuries must elapse before the loss of an entire day.[41] Such was the astonishing precision displayed by the Aztecs, or, perhaps, by their more polished Toltec predecessors, in these computations, so difficult as to have baffled, till a comparatively recent period, the most enlightened nations of Christendom![42]

whose work, however, Gama never saw (Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 7, cap. 9),—both of whom place the close of the year at midnight. Gama's hypothesis derives confirmation from a circumstance I have not seen noticed. Besides the "bundle" of fifty-two years, the Mexicans had a larger cycle of one hundred and four years, called "an old age." As this was not used in their reckonings, which were carried on by their "bundles," it seems highly probable that it was designed to express the period which would bring round the commencement of the smaller cycles to the same hour, and in which the intercalary days, amounting to twenty-five, might be comprehended without a fraction.

[40] This length, as computed by Zach, at 365d. 5h. 48m. 48sec., is only 2m. 9sec. longer than the Mexican; which corresponds with the celebrated calculation of the astronomers of the Caliph Almamon, that fell short about two minutes of the true time. See La Place, Exposition, p. 350.

[41] "El corto exceso de 4hor. 38min. 40seg., que hay de mas de los 25 dias en el período de 104 años, no puede componer un dia entero, hasta que pasen mas de cinco de estos períodos máximos ó 538 años." (Gama, Descripcion, Parte 1, p. 23.) Gama estimates the solar year at 365d. 5h. 48m. 50sec.

[42] The ancient Etruscans arranged their calendar in cycles of 110 solar years, and reckoned the year at 365d. 5h. 40m.; at least this seems probable, says Niebuhr. (History of Rome, Eng. trans. (Cambridge, 1828), vol. i. pp. 113, 238.) The early Romans had not wit

The chronological system of the Mexicans, by which they determined the date of any particular event, was also very remarkable. The epoch from which they reckoned corresponded with the year 1091 of the Christian era. It was the period of the reform of their calendar, soon after their migration from Aztlan. They threw the years, as already noticed, into great cycles, of fifty-two each, which they called "sheafs," or "bundles," and represented by a quantity of reeds bound together by a string. As often as this hieroglyphic occurs in their maps, it shows the number of half-centuries. To enable them to specify any partic-

enough to avail themselves of this accurate measurement, which came within nine minutes of the true time. The Julian reform, which assumed 365d. 5¼h. as the length of the year, erred as much, or rather more, on the other side. And when the Europeans, who adopted this calendar, landed in Mexico, their reckoning was nearly eleven days in advance of the exact time,—or, in other words, of the reckoning of the barbarous Aztecs; a remarkable fact.—Gama's researches led to the conclusion that the year of the new cycle began with the Aztecs on the ninth of January; a date considerably earlier than that usually assigned by the Mexican writers. (Descripcion, Parte 2, pp. 49–52.) By postponing the intercalation to the end of fifty-two years, the annual loss of six hours made every fourth year begin a day earlier. Thus, the cycle commencing on the ninth of January, the fifth year of it began on the eighth, the ninth year on the seventh, and so on; so that the last day of the series of fifty-two years fell on the twenty-sixth of December, when the intercalation of thirteen days rectified the chronology and carried the commencement of the new year to the ninth of January again. Torquemada, puzzled by the irregularity of the new-year's day, asserts that the Mexicans were unacquainted with the annual excess of six hours, and therefore never intercalated! (Monarch. Ind., lib. 10, cap. 36.) The interpreter of the Vatican Codex has fallen into a series of blunders on the same subject, still more ludicrous. (Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi. Pl. 16.) So soon had Aztec science fallen into oblivion after the Conquest!

ular year, they divided the great cycle into four smaller cycles, or indictions, of thirteen years each. They then adopted two periodical series of signs, one consisting of their numerical dots, up to thirteen, the other, of four hieroglyphics of the years.[43] These latter they repeated in regular succession, setting against each one a number of the corresponding series of dots, continued also in regular succession up to thirteen. The same system was pursued through the four indictions, which thus, it will be observed, began always with a different hieroglyphic of the year from the preceding; and in this way each of the hieroglyphics was made to combine successively with each of the numerical signs, but never twice with the same; since four, and thirteen, the factors of fifty-two,—the number of years in the cycle,—must admit of just as many combinations as are equal to their product. Thus every year had its appropriate symbol, by which it was at once recognized. And this symbol, preceded by the proper number of "bundles" indicating the half-centuries, showed the precise time which had elapsed since the national epoch of 1091.[44] The inge-

[43] These hieroglyphics were a "rabbit," a "reed," a "flint," a "house." They were taken as symbolical of the four elements, air, water, fire, earth, according to Veytia. (Hist. antig., tom. i. cap. 5.) It is not easy to see the connection between the terms "rabbit" and "air," which lead the respective series.*

[44] The following table of two of the four indictions of thirteen years each will make the text more clear. The first column shows the actual year of the great cycle, or "bundle." The second, the numerical dots used in their arithmetic. The third is composed of their hieroglyphics for rabbit, reed, flint, house, in their regular order.

* [The fleet and noiseless motions of the animal seem to offer an obvious explanation of the symbol.—ED.]

nious contrivance of a periodical series, in place of the cumbrous system of hieroglyphical notation, is not

First Indiction.			Second Indiction.		
Year of the Cycle.			Year of the Cycle.		
1.	·		14.	·	
2.	· ·		15.	· ·	
3.	· · ·		16.	· · ·	
4.	· · · ·		17.	· · · ·	
5.	· · · · ·		18.	· · · · ·	
6.	· · · · · ·		19.	· · · · · ·	
7.	· · · · · ·		20.	· · · · · ·	
8.	· · · · · ·		21.	· · · · · ·	
9.	· · · · · ·		22.	· · · · · ·	
10.	· · · · · ·		23.	· · · · · ·	
11.	· · · · · ·		24.	· · · · · ·	
12.	· · · · · ·		25.	· · · · · ·	
13.	· · · · · ·		26.	· · · · · ·	

By pursuing the combinations through the two remaining indictions, it will be found that the same number of dots will never coincide with

peculiar to the Aztecs, and is to be found among various nations on the Asiatic continent,—the same in principle, though varying materially in arrangement.[45]

The solar calendar above described might have answered all the purposes of the people; but the priests chose to construct another for themselves. This was called a "lunar reckoning," though nowise accommodated to the revolutions of the moon.[46] It was formed,

the same hieroglyphic. These tables are generally thrown into the form of wheels, as are those also of their months and days, having a very pretty effect. Several have been published, at different times, from the collections of Siguenza and Boturini. The wheel of the great cycle of fifty-two years is encompassed by a serpent, which was also the symbol of "an age," both with the Persians and Egyptians. Father Toribio seems to misapprehend the nature of these chronological wheels: "Tenian rodelas y escudos, y en ellas pintadas las figuras y armas de sus Demonios con su blason." Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 4.

[45] Among the Chinese, Japanese, Moghols, Mantchous, and other families of the Tartar race. Their series are composed of symbols of their five elements, and the twelve zodiacal signs, making a cycle of sixty years' duration. Their several systems are exhibited, in connection with the Mexican, in the luminous pages of Humboldt (Vues des Cordillères, p. 149), who draws important consequences from the comparison, to which we shall have occasion to return hereafter.

[46] In this calendar, the months of the tropical year were distributed into cycles of thirteen days, which, being repeated twenty times,—the number of days in a solar month,—completed the lunar, or astrological, year of 260 days; when the reckoning began again. "By the contrivance of these *trecenas* (terms of thirteen days) and the cycle of fifty-two years," says Gama, "they formed a luni-solar period, most exact for astronomical purposes." (Description, Parte 1, p. 27.) He adds that these *trecenas* were suggested by the periods in which the moon is visible before and after conjunction. (Loc. cit.) It seems hardly possible that a people capable of constructing a calendar so accurately on the true principles of solar time should so grossly err as to suppose that in this reckoning they really "represented the daily

also, of two periodical series, one of them consisting of thirteen numerical signs, or dots, the other, of the twenty hieroglyphics of the days. But, as the product of these combinations would be only 260, and as some confusion might arise from the repetition of the same terms for the remaining 105 days of the year, they invented a third series, consisting of nine additional hieroglyphics, which, alternating with the two preceding series, rendered it impossible that the three should coincide twice in the same year, or indeed in less than 2340 days; since $20 \times 13 \times 9 = 2340$.[47] Thirteen was a mystic number, of frequent use in their tables.[48] Why they resorted to that of nine, on this occasion, is not so clear.[49]

revolutions of the moon." "The whole Eastern world," says the learned Niebuhr, "has followed the moon in its calendar; the free scientific division of a vast portion of time is peculiar to the West. Connected with the West is that primeval extinct world which we call the New." History of Rome, vol. i. p. 239.

[47] They were named "companions," and "lords of the night," and were supposed to preside over the night, as the other signs did over the day. Boturini, Idea, p. 57.

[48] Thus, their astrological year was divided into months of thirteen days; there were thirteen years in their indictions, which contained each three hundred and sixty-five periods of thirteen days, etc. It is a curious fact that the number of lunar months of thirteen days contained in a cycle of fifty-two years, with the intercalation, should correspond precisely with the number of years in the great Sothic period of the Egyptians, namely, 1491; a period in which the seasons and festivals came round to the same place in the year again. The coincidence may be accidental. But a people employing periodical series and astrological calculations have generally some meaning in the numbers they select and the combinations to which they lead.

[49] According to Gama (Descripcion, Parte 1, pp. 75, 76), because 360 can be divided by nine without a fraction; the nine "companions" not being attached to the five complementary days. But 4, a mystic

This second calendar rouses a holy indignation in the early Spanish missionaries, and Father Sahagun loudly condemns it, as "most unhallowed, since it is founded neither on natural reason, nor on the influence of the planets, nor on the true course of the year; but is plainly the work of necromancy, and the fruit of a compact with the Devil!"[50] One may doubt whether the superstition of those who invented the scheme was greater than that of those who thus impugned it. At all events, we may, without having recourse to supernatural agency, find in the human heart a sufficient explanation of its origin; in that love of power, that

number much used in their arithmetical combinations, would have answered the same purpose equally well. In regard to this, McCulloh obscrves, with much shrewdness, "It seems impossible that the Mexicans, so careful in constructing their cycle, should abruptly terminate it with 360 revolutions, whose natural period of termination is 2340." And he supposes the nine "companions" were used in connection with the cycles of 260 days, in order to throw them into the larger ones, of 2340; eight of which, with a ninth of 260 days, he ascertains to be equal to the great solar period of 52 years. (Researches, pp. 207, 208.) This is very plausible. But in fact the combinations of the two first series, forming the cycle of 260 days, were always interrupted at the end of the year, since each new year began with the same hieroglyphic of the days. The third series of the "companions" was intermitted, as above stated, on the five unlucky days which closed the year, in order, if we may believe Boturini, that the first day of the solar year might have annexed to it the first of the nine "companions," which signified "lord of the year" (Idea, p. 57); a result which might have been equally well secured, without any intermission at all, by taking 5, another favorite number, instead of 9, as the divisor. As it was, however, the cycle, as far as the third series was concerned, did terminate with 360 revolutions. The subject is a perplexing one, and I can hardly hope to have presented it in such a manner as to make it perfectly clear to the reader.

[50] Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 4, Introd.

has led the priesthood of many a faith to affect a mystery the key to which was in their own keeping.

By means of this calendar, the Aztec priests kept their own records, regulated the festivals and seasons of sacrifice, and made all their astrological calculations.[51] The false science of astrology is natural to a state of society partially civilized, where the mind, impatient of the slow and cautious examination by which alone it can arrive at truth, launches at once into the regions of speculation, and rashly attempts to lift the veil—the impenetrable veil—which is drawn around the mysteries of nature. It is the characteristic of true science to discern the impassable, but not very obvious, limits which divide the province of reason from that of speculation. Such knowledge comes tardily. How many ages have rolled away, in which powers that, rightly directed, might have revealed the great laws of nature, have been wasted in brilliant but barren reveries on alchemy and astrology!

The latter is more particularly the study of a primitive age; when the mind, incapable of arriving at the stupendous fact that the myriads of minute lights glowing in the firmament are the centres of systems as glorious as our own, is naturally led to speculate on their probable uses, and to connect them in some way or other with man, for whose convenience every other object in the universe seems to have been created. As the eye

[51] "Dans les pays les plus différents," says Benjamin Constant, concluding some sensible reflections on the sources of the sacerdotal power, "chez les peuples de mœurs les plus opposées, le sacerdoce a dû au culte des éléments et des astres un pouvoir dont aujourd'hui nous concevons à peine l'idée." De la Religion (Paris, 1825), lib. 3, ch. 5.

of the simple child of nature watches, through the long nights, the stately march of the heavenly bodies, and sees the bright hosts coming up, one after another, and changing with the changing seasons of the year, he naturally associates them with those seasons, as the periods over which they hold a mysterious influence. In the same manner, he connects their appearance with any interesting event of the time, and explores, in their flaming characters, the destinies of the new-born infant.[52] Such is the origin of astrology, the false lights of which have continued from the earliest ages to dazzle and bewilder mankind, till they have faded away in the superior illumination of a comparatively recent period.

The astrological scheme of the Aztecs was founded less on the planetary influences than on those of the arbitrary signs they had adopted for the months and days. The character of the leading sign in each lunar cycle of thirteen days gave a complexion to the whole; though this was qualified in some degree by the signs of the succeeding days, as well as by those of the hours. It was in adjusting these conflicting forces that the great art of the diviner was shown. In no country, not even in ancient Egypt, were the dreams of the astrologer more implicitly deferred to. On the birth

[52] "It is a gentle and affectionate thought,
That, in immeasurable heights above us,
At our first birth the wreath of love was woven
With sparkling stars for flowers."
COLERIDGE: Translation of Wallenstein, act 2, sc. 4.

Schiller is more true to poetry than history, when he tells us, in the beautiful passage of which this is part, that the worship of the stars took the place of classic mythology. It existed long before it.

of a child, he was instantly summoned. The time of the event was accurately ascertained; and the family hung in trembling suspense, as the minister of Heaven cast the horoscope of the infant and unrolled the dark volume of destiny. The influence of the priest was confessed by the Mexican in the very first breath which he inhaled.[53]

We know little further of the astronomical attainments of the Aztecs. That they were acquainted with the cause of eclipses is evident from the representation, on their maps, of the disk of the moon projected on that of the sun.[54] Whether they had arranged a system of constellations is uncertain; though that they recognized some of the most obvious, as the Pleiades, for example, is evident from the fact that they regulated their festivals by them. We know of no astronomical instruments used by them, except the dial.[55]

53 Gama has given us a complete almanac of the astrological year, with the appropriate signs and divisions, showing with what scientific skill it was adapted to its various uses. (Descripcion, Parte 1, pp. 25–31, 62–76.) Sahagun has devoted a whole book to explaining the mystic import and value of these signs, with a minuteness that may enable one to cast up a scheme of nativity for himself. (Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 4.) It is evident he fully believed the magic wonders which he told. "It was a deceitful art," he says, "pernicious and idolatrous, and was never contrived by human reason." The good father was certainly no philosopher.

54 See, among others, the Cod. Tel.-Rem., Part 4, Pl. 22, ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. i.

55 "It can hardly be doubted," says Lord Kingsborough, "that the Mexicans were acquainted with many scientifical instruments of strange invention, as compared with our own; whether the *telescope* may not have been of the number is uncertain; but the thirteenth plate of M. Dupaix's *Monuments*, Part Second, which represents a man holding something of a similar nature to his eye, affords reason to suppose

An immense circular block of carved stone, disinterred in 1790, in the great square of Mexico, has supplied an acute and learned scholar with the means of establishing some interesting facts in regard to Mexican science.[56] This colossal fragment, on which the calendar is engraved, shows that they had the means of settling the hours of the day with precision, the periods of the solstices and of the equinoxes, and that of the transit of the sun across the zenith of Mexico.[57]

We cannot contemplate the astronomical science of the Mexicans, so disproportioned to their progress in other walks of civilization, without astonishment. An acquaintance with some of the more obvious principles of astronomy is within the reach of the rudest people.

that they knew how to improve the powers of vision." (Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi. p. 15, note.) The instrument alluded to is rudely carved on a conical rock. It is raised no higher than the neck of the person who holds it, and looks—to my thinking—as much like a musket as a telescope; though I shall not infer the use of fire-arms among the Aztecs from this circumstance. (See vol. iv. Pl. 15.) Captain Dupaix, however, in his commentary on the drawing, sees quite as much in it as his lordship. Ibid., vol. v. p. 241.

[56] Gama, Descripcion, Parte 1, sec. 4; Parte 2, Apend.—Besides this colossal fragment, Gama met with some others, designed, probably, for similar scientific uses, at Chapoltepec. Before he had leisure to examine them, however, they were broken up for materials to build a furnace,—a fate not unlike that which has too often befallen the monuments of ancient art in the Old World.

[57] In his second treatise on the cylindrical stone, Gama dwells more at large on its scientific construction, as a vertical sun-dial, in order to dispel the doubts of some sturdy skeptics on this point. (Descripcion, Parte 2, Apend. 1.) The civil day was distributed by the Mexicans into sixteen parts, and began, like that of most of the Asiatic nations, with sunrise. M. de Humboldt, who probably never saw Gama's second treatise, allows only eight intervals. Vues des Cordillères, p. 128.

With a little care, they may learn to connect the regular changes of the seasons with those of the place of the sun at his rising and setting. They may follow the march of the great luminary through the heavens, by watching the stars that first brighten on his evening track or fade in his morning beams. They may measure a revolution of the moon, by marking her phases, and may even form a general idea of the number of such revolutions in a solar year. But that they should be capable of accurately adjusting their festivals by the movements of the heavenly bodies, and should fix the true length of the tropical year, with a precision unknown to the great philosophers of antiquity, could be the result only of a long series of nice and patient observations, evincing no slight progress in civilization.[58] But whence could the rude inhabitants of these mountain-regions have derived this curious erudition? Not from the barbarous hordes who roamed over the higher latitudes of the North; nor from the more polished races on the Southern continent, with whom, it is apparent, they had no intercourse. If we are driven, in our embarrassment, like the greatest astronomer of our age, to seek the solution among the civilized communities of Asia, we shall still be perplexed by finding,

[58] "Un calendrier," exclaims the enthusiastic Carli, "qui est réglé sur la révolution annuelle du soleil, non-seulement par l'addition de cinq jours tous les ans, mais encore par la correction du bissextile, doit sans doute être regardé comme une opération déduite d'une étude réfléchie, et d'une grande combinaison. Il faut donc supposer chez ces peuples une suite d'observations astronomiques, une idée distincte de la sphère, de la déclinaison de l'écliptique, et l'usage d'un calcul concernant les jours et les heures des apparitions solaires." Lettres Américaines, tom. i. let. 23.

amidst general resemblance of outline, sufficient discrepancy in the details to vindicate, in the judgments of many, the Aztec claim to originality.[59]

I shall conclude the account of Mexican science with that of a remarkable festival, celebrated by the natives at the termination of the great cycle of fifty-two years. We have seen, in the preceding chapter, their tradition of the destruction of the world at four successive epochs. They looked forward confidently to another such catastrophe, to take place, like the preceding, at the close of a cycle, when the sun was to be effaced from the heavens, the human race from the earth, and when the darkness of chaos was to settle on the habitable globe. The cycle would end in the latter part of December, and as the dreary season of the winter solstice approached, and the diminished light of day gave melancholy presage of its speedy extinction, their apprehensions increased; and on the arrival of the five "unlucky" days which closed the year they abandoned themselves to despair.[60] They broke in pieces the little images of their household gods, in whom they no longer trusted. The holy fires were suffered to go out in the temples, and none were lighted in their own dwellings. Their furniture and domestic utensils were destroyed; their garments torn in pieces;

[59] La Place, who suggests the analogy, frankly admits the difficulty. Système du Monde, lib. 5, ch. 3.

[60] M. Jomard errs in placing the *new fire*, with which ceremony the old cycle properly concluded, at the winter solstice. It was not till the 26th of December, if Gama is right. The cause of M. Jomard's error is his fixing it before, instead of after, the complementary days. See his sensible letter on the Aztec calendar, in the Vues des Cordillères, p. 309.

and every thing was thrown into disorder, for the coming of the evil genii who were to descend on the desolate earth.

On the evening of the last day, a procession of priests, assuming the dress and ornaments of their gods, moved from the capital towards a lofty mountain, about two leagues distant. They carried with them a noble victim, the flower of their captives, and an apparatus for kindling the *new fire*, the success of which was an augury of the renewal of the cycle. On reaching the summit of the mountain, the procession paused till midnight; when, as the constellation of the Pleiades approached the zenith,[61] the *new fire* was kindled by the friction of the sticks placed on the wounded breast of the victim.[62] The flame was soon communicated to a funeral pile, on which the body of the slaughtered captive was thrown. As the light streamed up towards heaven, shouts of joy and triumph burst forth from the countless multitudes who covered the hills, the terraces of the temples, and the house-tops, with eyes anxiously bent on the mount of sacrifice. Couriers, with torches

[61] At the actual moment of their culmination, according to both Sahagun (Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 4, Apend.) and Torquemada (Monarch. Ind., lib. 10, cap. 33, 36). But this could not be, as that took place at midnight, in November, so late as the last secular festival, which was early in Montezuma's reign, in 1507. (Gama, Descripcion, Parte 1, p. 50, nota.—Humboldt, Vues des Cordillères, pp. 181, 182.) The longer we postpone the beginning of the new cycle, the greater must be the discrepancy.

[62] "On his bare breast the cedar boughs are laid;
On his bare breast, dry sedge and odorous gums,
Laid ready to receive the sacred spark,
And blaze, to herald the ascending Sun,
Upon his living altar."

SOUTHEY'S Madoc, part 2, canto 26.

lighted at the blazing beacon, rapidly bore them over every part of the country; and the cheering element was seen brightening on altar and hearth-stone, for the circuit of many a league, long before the sun, rising on his accustomed track, gave assurance that a new cycle had commenced its march, and that the laws of nature were not to be reversed for the Aztecs.

The following thirteen days were given up to festivity. The houses were cleansed and whitened. The broken vessels were replaced by new ones. The people, dressed in their gayest apparel, and crowned with garlands and chaplets of flowers, thronged in joyous procession to offer up their oblations and thanksgivings in the temples. Dances and games were instituted, emblematical of the regeneration of the world. It was the carnival of the Aztecs; or rather the national jubilee, the great secular festival, like that of the Romans, or ancient Etruscans, which few alive had witnessed before, or could expect to see again.[63]

[63] I borrow the words of the summons by which the people were called to the *ludi seculares*, the secular games of ancient Rome, "*quos nec spectâsset quisquam, nec spectaturus esset.*" (Suetonius, Vita Tib. Claudii, lib. 5.) The old Mexican chroniclers warm into something like eloquence in their descriptions of the Aztec festival. (Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 10, cap. 33.—Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 5.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 7, cap. 9–12. See, also, Gama, Descripcion, Parte 1, pp. 52–54.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. pp. 84–86.) The English reader will find a more brilliant coloring of the same scene in the canto of Madoc above cited,—"On the Close of the Century."

M. de Humboldt remarked, many years ago, "It were to be wished that some government would publish at its own expense the remains of the ancient American civilization; for it is only by the comparison

of several monuments that we can succeed in discovering the meaning of these allegories, which are partly astronomical and partly mystic." This enlightened wish has now been realized, not by any government, but by a private individual, Lord Kingsborough. The great work published under his auspices, and so often cited in this Introduction, appeared in London in 1830. When completed it will reach to nine volumes, seven of which are now before the public. Some idea of its magnificence may be formed by those who have not seen it, from the fact that copies of it, with colored plates, sold originally at £175, and, with uncolored, at £120. The price has been since much reduced. It is designed to exhibit a complete view of the ancient Aztec MSS., with such few interpretations as exist; the beautiful drawings of Castañeda relating to Central America, with the commentary of Dupaix; the unpublished history of Father Sahagun; and, last, not least, the copious annotations of his lordship.

Too much cannot be said of the mechanical execution of the book, —its splendid typography, the apparent accuracy and the delicacy of the drawings, and the sumptuous quality of the materials. Yet the purchaser would have been saved some superfluous expense, and the reader much inconvenience, if the letter-press had been in volumes of an ordinary size. But it is not uncommon, in works on this magnificent plan, to find utility in some measure sacrificed to show.

The collection of Aztec MSS., if not perfectly complete, is very extensive, and reflects great credit on the diligence and research of the compiler. It strikes one as strange, however, that not a single document should have been drawn from Spain. Peter Martyr speaks of a number having been brought thither in his time. (De Insulis nuper Inventis, p. 368.) The Marquis Spineto examined one in the Escorial, being the same with the Mendoza Codex, and perhaps the original, since that at Oxford is but a copy. (Lectures, Lect. 7.) Mr. Waddilove, chaplain of the British embassy to Spain, gave a particular account of one to Dr. Robertson, which he saw in the same library and considered an Aztec calendar. Indeed, it is scarcely possible that the frequent voyagers to the New World should not have furnished the mother-country with abundant specimens of this most interesting feature of Aztec civilization. Nor should we fear that the present liberal government would seclude these treasures from the inspection of the scholar.

Much cannot be said in favor of the arrangement of these codices. In some of them, as the Mendoza Codex, for example, the plates are

not even numbered; and one who would study them by the corresponding interpretation must often bewilder himself in the maze of hieroglyphics, without a clue to guide him. Neither is there any attempt to enlighten us as to the positive value and authenticity of the respective documents, or even their previous history, beyond a barren reference to the particular library from which they have been borrowed. Little light, indeed, can be expected on these matters; but we have not that little. The defect of arrangement is chargeable on other parts of the work. Thus, for instance, the sixth book of Sahagun is transferred from the body of the history to which it belongs, to a preceding volume; while the grand hypothesis of his lordship, for which the work was concocted, is huddled into notes, hitched on random passages of the text, with a good deal less connection than the stories of Queen Scheherezade, in the "Arabian Nights," and not quite so entertaining.

The drift of Lord Kingsborough's speculations is, to establish the colonization of Mexico by the Israelites. To this the whole battery of his logic and learning is directed. For this, hieroglyphics are unriddled, manuscripts compared, monuments delineated. His theory, however, whatever be its merits, will scarcely become popular; since, instead of being exhibited in a clear and comprehensive form, readily embraced by the mind, it is spread over an infinite number of notes, thickly sprinkled with quotations from languages ancient and modern, till the weary reader, floundering about in the ocean of fragments, with no light to guide him, feels like Milton's Devil, working his way through chaos,—

"neither sea,
Nor good dry land; nigh foundered, on he fares."

It would be unjust, however, not to admit that the noble author, if his logic is not always convincing, shows much acuteness in detecting analogies; that he displays familiarity with his subject, and a fund of erudition, though it often runs to waste; that, whatever be the defects of arrangement, he has brought together a most rich collection of unpublished materials to illustrate the Aztec and, in a wider sense, American antiquities; and that by this munificent undertaking, which no government, probably, would have, and few individuals could have, executed, he has entitled himself to the lasting gratitude of every friend of science.

Another writer whose works must be diligently consulted by every student of Mexican antiquities is Antonio Gama. His life contains as

few incidents as those of most scholars. He was born at Mexico, in 1735, of a respectable family, and was bred to the law. He early showed a preference for mathematical studies, conscious that in this career lay his strength. In 1771 he communicated his observations on the eclipse of that year to the French astronomer M. de Lalande, who published them in Paris, with high commendations of the author. Gama's increasing reputation attracted the attention of government; and he was employed by it in various scientific labors of importance. His great passion, however, was the study of Indian antiquities. He made himself acquainted with the history of the native races, their traditions, their languages, and, as far as possible, their hieroglyphics. He had an opportunity of showing the fruits of this preparatory training, and his skill as an antiquary, on the discovery of the great calendar-stone, in 1790. He produced a masterly treatise on this, and another Aztec monument, explaining the objects to which they were devoted, and pouring a flood of light on the astronomical science of the aborigines, their mythology, and their astrological system. He afterwards continued his investigations in the same path, and wrote treatises on the dial, hieroglyphics, and arithmetic of the Indians. These, however, were not given to the world till a few years since, when they were published, together with a reprint of the former work, under the auspices of the industrious Bustamante. Gama died in 1802, leaving behind him a reputation for great worth in private life,— one in which the bigotry that seems to enter too frequently into the character of the Spanish-Mexican was tempered by the liberal feelings of a man of science. His reputation as a writer stands high for patient acquisition, accuracy, and acuteness. His conclusions are neither warped by the love of theory so common in the philosopher, nor by the easy credulity so natural to the antiquary. He feels his way with the caution of a mathematician, whose steps are demonstrations. M. de Humboldt was largely indebted to his first work, as he has emphatically acknowledged. But, notwithstanding the eulogiums of this popular writer, and his own merits, Gama's treatises are rarely met with out of New Spain, and his name can hardly be said to have a transatlantic reputation.

CHAPTER V.

AZTEC AGRICULTURE.—MECHANICAL ARTS.—MERCHANTS.—DOMESTIC MANNERS.

It is hardly possible that a nation so far advanced as the Aztecs in mathematical science should not have made considerable progress in the mechanical arts, which are so nearly connected with it. Indeed, intellectual progress of any kind implies a degree of refinement that requires a certain cultivation of both useful and elegant art. The savage wandering through the wide forest, without shelter for his head or raiment for his back, knows no other wants than those of animal appetites, and, when they are satisfied, seems to himself to have answered the only ends of existence. But man, in society, feels numerous desires, and artificial tastes spring up, accommodated to the various relations in which he is placed, and perpetually stimulating his invention to devise new expedients to gratify them.

There is a wide difference in the mechanical skill of different nations; but the difference is still greater in the inventive power which directs this skill and makes it available. Some nations seem to have no power beyond that of imitation, or, if they possess invention, have it in so low a degree that they are constantly repeating the same idea, without a shadow of alteration or improvement; as the bird builds precisely the

same kind of nest which those of its own species built at the beginning of the world. Such, for example, are the Chinese, who have probably been familiar for ages with the germs of some discoveries, of little practical benefit to themselves, but which, under the influence of European genius, have reached a degree of excellence that has wrought an important change in the constitution of society.

Far from looking back and forming itself slavishly on the past, it is characteristic of the European intellect to be ever on the advance. Old discoveries become the basis of new ones. It passes onward from truth to truth, connecting the whole by a succession of links, as it were, into the great chain of science which is to encircle and bind together the universe. The light of learning is shed over the labors of art. New avenues are opened for the communication both of person and of thought. New facilities are devised for subsistence. Personal comforts, of every kind, are inconceivably multiplied, and brought within the reach of the poorest. Secure of these, the thoughts travel into a nobler region than that of the senses; and the appliances of art are made to minister to the demands of an elegant taste and a higher moral culture.

The same enlightened spirit, applied to agriculture, raises it from a mere mechanical drudgery, or the barren formula of traditional precepts, to the dignity of a science. As the composition of the earth is analyzed, man learns the capacity of the soil that he cultivates; and, as his empire is gradually extended over the elements of nature, he gains the power to stimulate her to her most bountiful and various pro-

duction. It is with satisfaction that we can turn to the land of our fathers, as the one in which the experiment has been conducted on the broadest scale and attended with results that the world has never before witnessed. With equal truth, we may point to the Anglo-Saxon race in both hemispheres, as that whose enterprising genius has contributed most essentially to the great interests of humanity, by the application of science to the useful arts.

Husbandry, to a very limited extent, indeed, was practised by most of the rude tribes of North America. Wherever a natural opening in the forest, or a rich strip of *interval*, met their eyes, or a green slope was found along the rivers, they planted it with beans and Indian corn.[1] The cultivation was slovenly in the extreme, and could not secure the improvident natives from the frequent recurrence of desolating famines. Still, that they tilled the soil at all was a peculiarity which honorably distinguished them from other tribes of hunters, and raised them one degree higher in the scale of civilization.

Agriculture in Mexico was in the same advanced state as the other arts of social life. In few countries, indeed, has it been more respected. It was closely interwoven with the civil and religious institutions of the nation. There were peculiar deities to preside

[1] This latter grain, according to Humboldt, was found by the Europeans in the New World, from the South of Chili to Pennsylvania (Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 408); he might have added, to the St. Lawrence. Our Puritan fathers found it in abundance on the New England coast, wherever they landed. See Morton, New England's Memorial (Boston, 1826), p. 68.—Gookin, Massachusetts Historical Collections, chap. 3.

over it; the names of the months and of the religious festivals had more or less reference to it. The public taxes, as we have seen, were often paid in agricultural produce. All except the soldiers and great nobles, even the inhabitants of the cities, cultivated the soil. The work was chiefly done by the men; the women scattering the seed, husking the corn, and taking part only in the lighter labors of the field.[2] In this they presented an honorable contrast to the other tribes of the continent, who imposed the burden of agriculture, severe as it is in the North, on their women.[3] Indeed, the sex was as tenderly regarded by the Aztecs in this matter, as it is, in most parts of Europe, at the present day.

There was no want of judgment in the management of their ground. When somewhat exhausted, it was permitted to recover by lying fallow. Its extreme dryness was relieved by canals, with which the land was partially irrigated; and the same end was promoted by severe penalties against the destruction of

[2] Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 13, cap. 31.—"Admirable example for our times," exclaims the good father, "when women are not only unfit for the labors of the field, but have too much levity to attend to their own household!"

[3] A striking contrast also to the Egyptians, with whom some antiquaries are disposed to identify the ancient Mexicans. Sophocles notices the effeminacy of the men in Egypt, who stayed at home tending the loom, while their wives were employed in severe labors out of doors:

"Ὦ πάντ' ἐκείνω τοῖς ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ νόμοις
Φύσιν κατεικασθέντε καὶ βίου τροφάς,
Ἐκεῖ γὰρ οἱ μὲν ἄρσενες κατὰ στέγας
Θακοῦσιν ἱστουργοῦντες· αἱ δὲ σύννομοι
Τἄξω βίου τροφεῖα πορσύνουσ' ἀεί."

SOPHOCL., Œdip. Col., v. 337–341.

the woods, with which the country, as already noticed, was well covered before the Conquest. Lastly, they provided for their harvests ample granaries, which were admitted by the Conquerors to be of admirable construction. In this provision we see the forecast of civilized man.[4]

Among the most important articles of husbandry, we may notice the banana, whose facility of cultivation and exuberant returns are so fatal to habits of systematic and hardy industry.[5] Another celebrated plant was the cacao, the fruit of which furnished the chocolate,—from the Mexican *chocolatl*,—now so common a beverage throughout Europe.[6] The vanilla, confined to a small district of the sea-coast, was used for the same purposes, of flavoring their food and drink, as with us.[7] The great staple of the country, as, indeed, of the American continent, was maize, or Indian corn, which grew freely along the valleys, and up the steep sides of the Cordilleras to the high level of the table-

[4] Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 13, cap. 32.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. pp. 153–155.—"Jamas padeciéron hambre," says the former writer, "sino en pocas ocasiones." If these famines were rare, they were very distressing, however, and lasted very long. Comp. Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 41, 71, et alibi.

[5] Oviedo considers the *musa* an imported plant; and Hernandez, in his copious catalogue, makes no mention of it at all. But Humboldt, who has given much attention to it, concludes that, if some species were brought into the country, others were indigenous. (Essai politique, tom. ii. pp. 382–388.) If we may credit Clavigero, the banana was the forbidden fruit that tempted our poor mother Eve! Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 49, nota.

[6] Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 306.—Hernandez, De Historiâ Plantarum Novæ Hispaniæ (Matriti, 1790), lib. 6, cap. 87.

[7] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 8, cap. 13, et alibi.

land. The Aztecs were as curious in its preparation, and as well instructed in its manifold uses, as the most expert New England housewife. Its gigantic stalks, in these equinoctial regions, afford a saccharine matter, not found to the same extent in northern latitudes, and supplied the natives with sugar little inferior to that of the cane itself, which was not introduced among them till after the Conquest.[8] But the miracle of nature was the great Mexican aloe, or *maguey*, whose clustering pyramids of flowers, towering above their dark coronals of leaves, were seen sprinkled over many a broad acre of the table-land. As we have already noticed, its bruised leaves afforded a paste from which paper was manufactured;[9] its juice was fermented into an intoxicating beverage, *pulque*, of which the natives, to this day, are excessively fond;[10] its leaves further supplied an impenetrable thatch for the more humble

[8] Carta del. Lic. Zuazo, MS.—He extols the honey of the maize, as equal to that of bees. (Also Oviedo, Hist. natural de las Indias, cap. 4, ap. Barcia, tom. i.) Hernandez, who celebrates the manifold ways in which the maize was prepared, derives it from the Haytian word *mahiz*. Hist. Plantarum, lib. 6, cap. 44. 45.

[9] And is still, in one spot at least, San Ángel,—three leagues from the capital. Another mill was to have been established, a few years since, in Puebla. Whether this has actually been done, I am ignorant. See the Report of the Committee on Agriculture to the Senate of the United States, March 12, 1838.

[10] Before the Revolution, the duties on the *pulque* formed so important a branch of revenue that the cities of Mexico, Puebla, and Toluca alone paid $817,739 to government. (Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 47.) It requires time to reconcile Europeans to the peculiar flavor of this liquor, on the merits of which they are consequently much divided. There is but one opinion among the natives. The English reader will find a good account of its manufacture in Ward's Mexico, vol. ii. pp. 55–60.

dwellings; thread, of which coarse stuffs were made, and strong cords, were drawn from its tough and twisted fibres; pins and needles were made of the thorns at the extremity of its leaves; and the root, when properly cooked, was converted into a palatable and nutritious food. The *agave*, in short, was meat, drink, clothing, and writing-materials, for the Aztec! Surely, never did Nature enclose in so compact a form so many of the elements of human comfort and civilization![11]

It would be obviously out of place to enumerate in these pages all the varieties of plants, many of them of medicinal virtue, which have been introduced from Mexico into Europe. Still less can I attempt a catalogue of its flowers, which, with their variegated and

[11] Hernandez enumerates the several species of the maguey, which are turned to these manifold uses, in his learned work, De Hist. Plantarum. (Lib. 7, cap. 71, et seq.) M. de Humboldt considers them all varieties of the *agave Americana*, familiar in the southern parts both of the United States and Europe. (Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 487, et seq.) This opinion has brought on him a rather sour rebuke from our countryman the late Dr. Perrine, who pronounces them a distinct species from the American *agave*, and regards one of the kinds, the *pita*, from which the fine thread is obtained, as a totally distinct genus. (See the Report of the Committee on Agriculture.) Yet the Baron may find authority for all the properties ascribed by him to the maguey, in the most accredited writers who have resided more or less time in Mexico. See, among others, Hernandez, ubi supra.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 9, cap. 2; lib. 11, cap. 7.—Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 19.—Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS. The last, speaking of the maguey, which produces the fermented drink, says expressly, "With what remain of these leaves they manufacture excellent and very fine cloth, resembling holland, or the finest linen." It cannot be denied, however, that Dr. Perrine shows himself intimately acquainted with the structure and habits of the tropical plants, which, with such patriotic spirit, he proposed to introduce into Florida.

gaudy colors, form the greatest attraction of our greenhouses. The opposite climates embraced within the narrow latitudes of New Spain have given to it, probably, the richest and most diversified flora to be found in any country on the globe. These different products were systematically arranged by the Aztecs, who understood their properties, and collected them into nurseries, more extensive than any then existing in the Old World. It is not improbable that they suggested the idea of those "gardens of plants" which were introduced into Europe not many years after the Conquest.[12]

The Mexicans were as well acquainted with the mineral as with the vegetable treasures of their kingdom. Silver, lead, and tin they drew from the mines of Tasco; copper from the mountains of Zacotollan. These were taken not only from the crude masses on the surface, but from veins wrought in the solid rock, into which they opened extensive galleries. In fact, the traces of their labors furnished the best indications for the early Spanish miners.[13] Gold, found on the surface, or gleaned from the beds of rivers, was cast

[12] The first regular establishment of this kind, according to Carli, was at Padua, in 1545. Lettres Américaines, tom. i. chap. 21.

[13] [Though I have conformed to the views of Humboldt in regard to the knowledge of mining possessed by the ancient Mexicans, Señor Ramirez thinks the conclusions to which I have been led are not warranted by the ancient writers. From the language of Bernal Diaz and of Sahagun, in particular, he infers that their only means of obtaining the precious metals was by gathering such detached masses as were found on the surface of the ground or in the beds of the rivers. The small amount of silver in their possession he regards as an additional proof of their ignorance of the proper method and their want of the requisite tools for extracting it from the earth. See Ramirez, Notas y Esclarecimientos, p. 73.]

into bars, or, in the form of dust, made part of the regular tribute of the southern provinces of the empire. The use of iron, with which the soil was impregnated, was unknown to them. Notwithstanding its abundance, it demands so many processes to prepare it for use that it has commonly been one of the last metals pressed into the service of man. The age of iron has followed that of brass, in fact as well as in fiction.[14]

They found a substitute in an alloy of tin and copper, and, with tools made of this bronze, could cut not only metals, but, with the aid of a silicious dust, the hardest substances, as basalt, porphyry, amethysts, and emeralds.[15] They fashioned these last, which were found very large, into many curious and fantastic forms. They cast, also, vessels of gold and silver, carving them with their metallic chisels in a very

[14] P. Martyr, De Orbe Novo, Decades (Compluti, 1530), dec. 5, p. 191.—Acosta, lib. 4, cap. 3.—Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. iii. pp. 114–125.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 13, cap. 34.

"Men wrought in brass," says Hesiod, "when iron did not exist."

Χαλκῷ δ' ἐργάζοντο' μέλας δ' οὐκ ἔσκε σίδηρος.

HESIOD, Ἔργα καὶ Ἡμέραι.

The Abbé Raynal contends that the ignorance of iron must necessarily have kept the Mexicans in a low state of civilization, since without it "they could have produced no work in metal, worth looking at, no masonry nor architecture, engraving nor sculpture." (History of the Indies, Eng. trans., vol. iii. b. 6.) Iron, however, if known, was little used by the ancient Egyptians, whose mighty monuments were hewn with bronze tools; while their weapons and domestic utensils were of the same material, as appears from the green color given to them in their paintings.

[15] Gama, Descripcion, Parte 2, pp. 25–29.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., ubi supra.

delicate manner. Some of the silver vases were so large that a man could not encircle them with his arms. They imitated very nicely the figures of animals, and, what was extraordinary, could mix the metals in such a manner that the feathers of a bird, or the scales of a fish, should be alternately of gold and silver. The Spanish goldsmiths admitted their superiority over themselves in these ingenious works.[16]

They employed another tool, made of *itztli*, or obsidian, a dark transparent mineral, exceedingly hard, found in abundance in their hills. They made it into knives, razors, and their serrated swords. It took a keen edge, though soon blunted. With this they wrought the various stones and alabasters employed in the construction of their public works and principal dwellings. I shall defer a more particular account of these to the body of the narrative, and will only add here that the entrances and angles of the buildings were profusely ornamented with images, sometimes of their fantastic deities, and frequently of animals.[17] The latter were executed with great accuracy. "The former,"

[16] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 9, cap. 15–17.—Boturini, Idea, p. 77.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., loc. cit.—Herrera, who says they could also enamel, commends the skill of the Mexican goldsmiths in making birds and animals with movable wings and limbs, in a most curious fashion. (Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 15.) Sir John Maundeville, as usual,

> "with his hair on end
> At his own wonders,"

notices the "gret marvayle" of similar pieces of mechanism at the court of the grand Chane of Cathay. See his Voiage and Travaile, chap. 20.

[17] Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 11.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 13, cap. 34.—Gama, Descripcion, Parte 2, pp. 27, 28.

according to Torquemada, "were the hideous reflection of their own souls. And it was not till after they had been converted to Christianity that they could model the true figure of a man."[18] The old chronicler's facts are well founded, whatever we may think of his reasons. The allegorical phantasms of his religion, no doubt, gave a direction to the Aztec artist, in his delineation of the human figure; supplying him with an imaginary beauty in the personification of divinity itself. As these superstitions lost their hold on his mind, it opened to the influences of a purer taste; and, after the Conquest, the Mexicans furnished many examples of correct, and some of beautiful, portraiture.

Sculptured images were so numerous that the foundations of the cathedral in the *plaza mayor*, the great square of Mexico, are said to be entirely composed of them.[19] This spot may, indeed, be regarded as the Aztec forum,—the great depository of the treasures of ancient sculpture, which now lie hid in its bosom. Such monuments are spread all over the capital, however, and a new cellar can hardly be dug, or foundation laid, without turning up some of the mouldering relics of barbaric art. But they are little heeded, and, if not wantonly broken in pieces at once, are usually worked into the rising wall or supports of the new edifice.[20] Two celebrated bas-reliefs of the last Mon-

[18] "Parece, que permitia Dios, que la figura de sus cuerpos se asimilase á la que tenian sus almas por el pecado, en que siempre permanecian." Monarch. Ind., lib. 13, cap. 34.

[19] Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 195.

[20] Gama, Descripcion, Parte 1, p. 1. Besides the *plaza mayor*, Gama points out the Square of Tlatelolco, as a great cemetery of ancient relics. It was the quarter to which the Mexicans retreated, on the siege of the capital.

tezuma and his father, cut in the solid rock, in the beautiful groves of Chapoltepec, were deliberately destroyed, as late as the last century, by order of the government![21] The monuments of the barbarian meet with as little respect from civilized man as those of the civilized man from the barbarian.[22]

The most remarkable piece of sculpture yet disinterred is the great calendar-stone, noticed in the preceding chapter. It consists of dark porphyry, and in its original dimensions, as taken from the quarry, is computed to have weighed nearly fifty tons. It was transported from the mountains beyond Lake Chalco, a distance of many leagues, over a broken country intersected by water-courses and canals. In crossing a bridge which traversed one of these latter, in the capital, the supports gave way, and the huge mass was precipitated into the water, whence it was with difficulty recovered. The fact that so enormous a fragment of porphyry could be thus safely carried for leagues, in the face of such obstacles, and without the aid of cattle, —for the Aztecs, as already mentioned, had no animals of draught,—suggests to us no mean ideas of their mechanical skill and of their machinery, and implies a degree of cultivation little inferior to that demanded

[21] Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 13, cap. 34.—Gama, Descripcion, Parte 2, pp. 81–83.—These statues are repeatedly noticed by the old writers. The last was destroyed in 1754, when it was seen by Gama, who highly commends the execution of it. Ibid.

[22] This wantonness of destruction provokes the bitter animadversion of Martyr, whose enlightened mind respected the vestiges of civilization wherever found. "The conquerors," he says, "seldom repaired the buildings that were defaced. They would rather sack twenty stately cities than erect one good edifice." De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 10.

for the geometrical and astronomical science displayed in the inscriptions on this very stone.[23]

The ancient Mexicans made utensils of earthen-ware for the ordinary purposes of domestic life, numerous specimens of which still exist.[24] They made cups and vases of a lackered or painted wood, impervious to wet and gaudily colored. Their dyes were obtained from both mineral and vegetable substances. Among them was the rich crimson of the cochineal, the modern rival of the famed Tyrian purple. It was introduced into Europe from Mexico, where the curious little insect was nourished with great care on plantations of cactus, since fallen into neglect.[25] The natives were thus enabled to give a brilliant coloring to the webs which were manufactured, of every degree of fineness, from the cotton raised in abundance throughout the warmer regions of the country. They had the art, also, of interweaving with these the delicate hair of rabbits and other animals, which made a cloth of great warmth as

[23] Gama, Descripcion, Parte 1, pp. 110–114.—Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 40.—Ten thousand men were employed in the transportation of this enormous mass, according to Tezozomoc, whose narrative, with all the accompanying prodigies, is minutely transcribed by Bustamante. The Licentiate shows an appetite for the marvellous which might excite the envy of a monk of the Middle Ages. (See Descripcion, nota, loc. cit.) The English traveller Latrobe accommodates the wonders of nature and art very well to each other, by suggesting that these great masses of stone were transported by means of the mastodon, whose remains are occasionally disinterred in the Mexican Valley. Rambler in Mexico, p. 145.

[24] A great collection of ancient pottery, with various other specimens of Aztec art, the gift of Messrs. Poinsett and Keating, is deposited in the Cabinet of the American Philosophical Society, at Philadelphia. See the Catalogue, ap. Transactions, vol. iii. p. 510.

[25] Hernandez, Hist. Plantarum, lib. 6, cap. 116.

well as beauty, of a kind altogether original; and on this they often laid a rich embroidery, of birds, flowers, or some other fanciful device.[26]

But the art in which they most delighted was their *plumaje*, or feather-work. With this they could produce all the effect of a beautiful mosaic. The gorgeous plumage of the tropical birds, especially of the parrot tribe, afforded every variety of color; and the fine down of the humming-bird, which revelled in swarms among the honeysuckle bowers of Mexico, supplied them with soft aerial tints that gave an exquisite finish to the picture. The feathers, pasted on a fine cotton web, were wrought into dresses for the wealthy, hangings for apartments, and ornaments for the temples. No one of the American fabrics excited such admiration in Europe, whither numerous specimens were sent by the Conquerors. It is to be regretted that so graceful an art should have been suffered to fall into decay.[27]

[26] Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 15.—Boturini, Idea, p. 77.—It is doubtful how far they were acquainted with the manufacture of silk. Carli supposes that what Cortés calls silk was only the fine texture of hair, or down, mentioned in the text. (Lettres Américaines, tom. i. let. 21.) But it is certain they had a species of caterpillar, unlike our silkworm, indeed, which spun a thread that was sold in the markets of ancient Mexico. See the Essai politique (tom. iii. pp. 66–69), where M. de Humboldt has collected some interesting facts in regard to the culture of silk by the Aztecs. Still, that the fabric should be a matter of uncertainty at all shows that it could not have reached any great excellence or extent.

[27] Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.—Acosta, lib. 4, cap. 37.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 9, cap. 18–21.—Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 15.—Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 306.—Count Carli is in raptures with a specimen of feather-painting which he saw in Strasbourg. "Never did I behold anything so exquisite," he says, "for brilliancy and nice gradation of color, and

There were no shops in Mexico, but the various manufactures and agricultural products were brought together for sale in the great market-places of the principal cities. Fairs were held there every fifth day, and were thronged by a numerous concourse of persons, who came to buy or sell from all the neighboring country. A particular quarter was allotted to each kind of article. The numerous transactions were conducted without confusion, and with entire regard to justice, under the inspection of magistrates appointed for the purpose. The traffic was carried on partly by barter, and partly by means of a regulated currency, of different values. This consisted of transparent quills of gold dust; of bits of tin, cut in the form of a T; and of bags of cacao, containing a specified number of grains. "Blessed money," exclaims Peter Martyr, "which exempts its possessors from avarice, since it cannot be long hoarded, nor hidden under ground!" [28]

There did not exist in Mexico that distinction of castes found among the Egyptian and Asiatic nations.

for beauty of design. No European artist could have made such a thing." (Lettres Américaines, let. 21, note.) There is still one place, Patzquaro, where, according to Bustamante, they preserve some knowledge of this interesting art, though it is practised on a very limited scale and at great cost. Sahagun, ubi supra, nota.

[28] "O felicem monetam, quæ suavem utilemque præbet humano generi potum, et a tartareâ peste avàritiæ suos immunes servat possessores, quod suffodi aut diu servari nequeat!" De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 4.—(See, also, Carta de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 100, et seq. —Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 8, cap. 36.—Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 8.—Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.) The substitute for money throughout the Chinese empire was equally simple in Marco Polo's time, consisting of bits of stamped paper, made from the inner bark of the mulberry-tree. See Viaggi di Messer Marco Polo, gentil' huomo Venetiano, lib. 2, cap. 18, ap. Ramusio, tom. ii.

It was usual, however, for the son to follow the occupation of his father. The different trades were arranged into something like guilds; each having a particular district of the city appropriated to it, with its own chief, its own tutelar deity, its peculiar festivals, and the like. Trade was held in avowed estimation by the Aztecs. "Apply thyself, my son," was the advice of an aged chief, "to agriculture, or to feather-work, or some other honorable calling. Thus did your ancestors before you. Else how would they have provided for themselves and their families? Never was it heard that nobility alone was able to maintain its possessor."[29] Shrewd maxims, that must have sounded somewhat strange in the ear of a Spanish *hidalgo!*[30]

But the occupation peculiarly respected was that of the merchant. It formed so important and singular a feature of their social economy as to merit a much more particular notice than it has received from historians. The Aztec merchant was a sort of itinerant trader, who made his journeys to the remotest borders of Anahuac, and to the countries beyond, carrying with him merchandise of rich stuffs, jewelry, slaves, and other valuable commodities. The slaves were obtained at the great market of Azcapozalco, not many leagues from the capital, where fairs were regularly

[29] "Procurad de saber algun *oficio honroso*, como es el hacer obras de pluma y otros oficios mecánicos. . . . Mirad que tengais cuidado de lo tocante á la agricultura. . . . En ninguna parte he visto que alguno se mantenga por su nobleza." Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 6, cap. 17.

[30] Col. de Mendoza, ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. i. Pl. 71; vol. vi. p. 86.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 41.

held for the sale of these unfortunate beings. They were brought thither by their masters, dressed in their gayest apparel, and instructed to sing, dance, and display their little stock of personal accomplishments, so as to recommend themselves to the purchaser. Slave-dealing was an honorable calling among the Aztecs.[31]

With this rich freight, the merchant visited the different provinces, always bearing some present of value from his own sovereign to their chiefs, and usually receiving others in return, with a permission to trade. Should this be denied him, or should he meet with indignity or violence, he had the means of resistance in his power. He performed his journeys with a number of companions of his own rank, and a large body of inferior attendants who were employed to transport the goods. Fifty or sixty pounds were the usual load for a man. The whole caravan went armed, and so well provided against sudden hostilities that they could make good their defence, if necessary, till reinforced from home. In one instance, a body of these militant traders stood a siege of four years in the town of Ayotlan, which they finally took from the enemy.[32] Their own government, however, was always prompt to embark in a war on this ground, finding it a very convenient pretext for extending the Mexican empire. It was not unusual to allow the merchants to raise levies themselves, which were placed under their command. It was, moreover, very common for the prince to employ the merchants as a sort of spies, to furnish him information of the state of the countries through which

[31] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 9, cap. 4, 10–14.

[32] Ibid., lib. 9, cap. 2.

they passed, and the dispositions of the inhabitants towards himself.[33]

Thus their sphere of action was much enlarged beyond that of a humble trader, and they acquired a high consideration in the body politic. They were allowed to assume insignia and devices of their own. Some of their number composed what is called by the Spanish writers a council of finance; at least, this was the case in Tezcuco.[34] They were much consulted by the monarch, who had some of them constantly near his person, addressing them by the title of "uncle," which may remind one of that of *primo*, or "cousin," by which a grandee of Spain is saluted by his sovereign. They were allowed to have their own courts, in which civil and criminal cases, not excepting capital, were determined; so that they formed an independent community, as it were, of themselves. And, as their various traffic supplied them with abundant stores of wealth, they enjoyed many of the most essential advantages of an hereditary aristocracy.[35]

[33] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 9, cap. 2, 4.—In the Mendoza Codex is a painting representing the execution of a cacique and his family, with the destruction of his city, for maltreating the persons of some Aztec merchants. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. i. Pl. 67.

[34] Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 41.—Ixtlilxochitl gives a curious story of one of the royal family of Tezcuco, who offered, with two *other* merchants, *otros mercaderes*, to visit the court of a hostile cacique and bring him dead or alive to the capital. They availed themselves of a drunken revel, at which they were to have been sacrificed, to effect their object. Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 62.

[35] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 9, cap. 2, 5.—The ninth book is taken up with an account of the merchants, their pilgrimages, the religious rites on their departure, and the sumptuous way of living on their return. The whole presents a very remarkable picture, show-

That trade should prove the path to eminent political preferment in a nation but partially civilized, where the names of soldier and priest are usually the only titles to respect, is certainly an anomaly in history. It forms some contrast to the standard of the more polished monarchies of the Old World, in which rank is supposed to be less dishonored by a life of idle ease or frivolous pleasure than by those active pursuits which promote equally the prosperity of the state and of the individual. If civilization corrects many prejudices, it must be allowed that it creates others.

We shall be able to form a better idea of the actual refinement of the natives by penetrating into their domestic life and observing the intercourse between the sexes. We have, fortunately, the means of doing this. We shall there find the ferocious Aztec frequently displaying all the sensibility of a cultivated nature; consoling his friends under affliction, or congratulating them on their good fortune, as on occasion of a marriage, or of the birth or the baptism of a child, when he was punctilious in his visits, bringing presents of costly dresses and ornaments, or the more simple offering of flowers, equally indicative of his sympathy. The visits at these times, though regulated with all the precision of Oriental courtesy, were accompanied by expressions of the most cordial and affectionate regard.[36]

ing they enjoyed a consideration, among the half-civilized nations of Anahuac, to which there is no parallel, unless it be that possessed by the merchant-princes of an Italian republic, or the princely merchants of our own.

[36] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 6, cap. 23–37.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—These complimentary attentions were paid at stated seasons, even during pregnancy. The details are given with

The discipline of children, especially at the public schools, as stated in a previous chapter, was exceedingly severe.[37] But after she had come to a mature age the Aztec maiden was treated by her parents with a tenderness from which all reserve seemed banished. In the counsels to a daughter about to enter into life, they conjured her to preserve simplicity in her manners and conversation, uniform neatness in her attire, with strict attention to personal cleanliness. They inculcated modesty, as the great ornament of a woman, and implicit reverence for her husband; softening their admonitions by such endearing epithets as showed the fulness of a parent's love.[38]

abundant gravity and minuteness by Sahagun, who descends to particulars which his Mexican editor, Bustamante, has excluded, as somewhat too unreserved for the public eye. If they were more so than some of the editor's own notes, they must have been very communicative indeed.

[37] Zurita, Rapport, pp. 112–134.—The Third Part of the Col. de Mendoza (Antiq. of Mexico, vol. i.) exhibits the various ingenious punishments devised for the refractory child. The flowery path of knowledge was well strewed with thorns for the Mexican tyro.

[38] Zurita, Rapport, pp. 151–160.—Sahagun has given us the admonitions of both father and mother to the Aztec maiden on her coming to years of discretion. What can be more tender than the beginning of the mother's exhortation? "Hija mia muy amada, muy querida palomita: ya has oido y notado las palabras que tu señor padre te ha dicho; ellas son palabras preciosas, y que raramente se dicen ni se oyen, las quales han procedido de las entrañas y corazon en que estaban atesoradas; y tu muy amado padre bien sabe que eres su hija, engendrada de él, eres su sangre y su carne, y sabe Dios nuestro señor que es así; aunque eres muger, é imágen de tu padre ¿que mas te puedo decir, hija mia, de lo que ya esta dicho?" (Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 6, cap. 19.) The reader will find this interesting document, which enjoins so much of what is deemed most essential among civilized nations, translated entire in the Appendix, Part 2, No. 1.

Polygamy was permitted among the Mexicans, though chiefly confined, probably, to the wealthiest classes.[39] And the obligations of the married vow, which was made with all the formality of a religious ceremony, were fully recognized, and impressed on both parties. The women are described by the Spaniards as pretty, unlike their unfortunate descendants of the present day, though with the same serious and rather melancholy cast of countenance. Their long black hair, covered, in some parts of the country, by a veil made of the fine web of the *pita*, might generally be seen wreathed with flowers, or, among the richer people, with strings of precious stones, and pearls from the Gulf of California. They appear to have been treated with much consideration by their husbands, and passed their time in indolent tranquillity, or in such feminine occupations as spinning, embroidery, and the like, while their maidens beguiled the hours by the rehearsal of traditionary tales and ballads.[40]

The women partook equally with the men of social festivities and entertainments. These were often conducted on a large scale, both as regards the number of guests and the costliness of the preparations. Numerous attendants, of both sexes, waited at the banquet.

[39] Yet we find the remarkable declaration, in the counsels of a father to his son, that, for the multiplication of the species, God ordained one man only for one woman. "Nota, hijo mio, lo que te digo, mira que el mundo ya tiene este estilo de engendrar y multiplicar, y para esta generacion y multiplicacion, ordenó Dios que una muger usase de un varon, y un varon de una muger." Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 6, cap. 21.

[40] Ibid., lib. 6, cap. 21–23; lib. 8, cap. 23.—Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 305.—Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.

The halls were scented with perfumes, and the courts strewed with odoriferous herbs and flowers, which were distributed in profusion among the guests, as they arrived. Cotton napkins and ewers of water were placed before them, as they took their seats at the board; for the venerable ceremony of ablution[41] before and after eating was punctiliously observed by the Aztecs.[42] Tobacco was then offered to the company, in pipes, mixed up with aromatic substances, or in the form of cigars, inserted in tubes of tortoise-shell or silver. They compressed the nostrils with the fingers, while they inhaled the smoke, which they frequently

[41] As old as the heroic age of Greece, at least. We may fancy ourselves at the table of Penelope, where water in golden ewers was poured into silver basins for the accommodation of her guests, before beginning the repast:

"Χέρνιβα δ' ἀμφίπολος προχόῳ ἐπέχευε φέρουσα
Καλῇ, χρυσείῃ, ὑπὲρ ἀργυρέοιο λέβητος,
Νίψασθαι· παρὰ δὲ ξεστὴν ἐτάνυσσε τράπεζαν."

ΟΔΥΣΣ. Α.

The feast affords many other points of analogy to the Aztec, inferring a similar stage of civilization in the two nations. One may be surprised, however, to find a greater profusion of the precious metals in the barren isle of Ithaca than in Mexico. But the poet's fancy was a richer mine than either.

[42] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 6, cap. 22.—Amidst some excellent advice of a parent to his son, on his general deportment, we find the latter punctiliously enjoined not to take his seat at the board till he has washed his face and hands, and not to leave it till he has repeated the same thing, and *cleansed his teeth*. The directions are given with a precision worthy of an Asiatic. "Al principio de la comida labarte has las manos y la boca, y donde te juntares con otros á comer, no te sientes luego; mas antes tomarás el agua y la jícara para que se laben los otros, y echarles has agua á los manos, y despues de esto, cojerás lo que se ha caido por el suelo y barrerás el lugar de la comida, y tambien despues de comer lavarás te las manos y la boca, y limpiarás los dientes." Ibid., loc. cit.

swallowed. Whether the women, who sat apart from the men at table, were allowed the indulgence of the fragrant weed, as in the most polished circles of modern Mexico, is not told us. It is a curious fact that the Aztecs also took the dried leaf in the pulverized form of snuff.[43]

The table was well provided with substantial meats, especially game; among which the most conspicuous was the turkey, erroneously supposed, as its name imports, to have come originally from the East.[44] These

[43] Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 306.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 4, cap. 37.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 13, cap. 23.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 227.—The Aztecs used to smoke after dinner, to prepare for the *siesta*, in which they indulged themselves as regularly as an old Castilian.—Tobacco, in Mexican *yetl*, is derived from a Haytian word, *tabaco*. The natives of Hispaniola, being the first with whom the Spaniards had much intercourse, have supplied Europe with the names of several important plants.—Tobacco, in some form or other, was used by almost all the tribes of the American continent, from the Northwest Coast to Patagonia. (See McCulloh, Researches, pp. 91–94.) Its manifold virtues, both social and medicinal, are profusely panegyrized by Hernandez, in his Hist. Plantarum, lib. 2, cap. 109.

[44] This noble bird was introduced into Europe from Mexico. The Spaniards called it *gallopavo*, from its resemblance to the peacock. See Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio (tom. iii. fol. 306); also Oviedo (Rel. Sumaria, cap. 38), the earliest naturalist who gives an account of the bird, which he saw soon after the Conquest, in the West Indies, whither it had been brought, as he says, from New Spain. The Europeans, however, soon lost sight of its origin, and the name "turkey" intimated the popular belief of its Eastern origin. Several eminent writers have maintained its Asiatic or African descent; but they could not impose on the sagacious and better-instructed Buffon. (See Histoire naturelle, art. *Dindon*.) The Spaniards saw immense numbers of turkeys in the domesticated state, on their arrival in Mexico, where they were more common than any other poultry. They were found wild, not only in New Spain, but all along the con-

more solid dishes were flanked by others of vegetables and fruits, of every delicious variety found on the North American continent. The different viands were prepared in various ways, with delicate sauces and seasoning, of which the Mexicans were very fond. Their palate was still further regaled by confections and pastry, for which their maize-flour and sugar supplied ample materials. One other dish, of a disgusting nature, was sometimes added to the feast, especially when the celebration partook of a religious character. On such occasions a slave was sacrificed, and his flesh, elaborately dressed, formed one of the chief ornaments of the banquet. Cannibalism, in the guise of an Epicurean science, becomes even the more revolting.[45]

The meats were kept warm by chafing-dishes. The table was ornamented with vases of silver, and sometimes gold, of delicate workmanship. The drinking-cups and spoons were of the same costly materials, and likewise of tortoise-shell. The favorite beverage was the *chocolatl*, flavored with vanilla and different spices.

tinent, in the less frequented places, from the Northwestern territory of the United States to Panamá. The wild turkey is larger, more beautiful, and every way an incomparably finer bird than the tame. Franklin, with some point, as well as pleasantry, insists on its preference to the bald eagle as the national emblem. (See his Works, vol. x. p. 63, in Sparks's excellent edition.) Interesting notices of the history and habits of the wild turkey may be found in the Ornithology both of Buonaparte and of that enthusiastic lover of nature, Audubon, *vox Meleagris, Gallopavo.*

[45] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 4, cap. 37; lib. 8, cap. 13; lib. 9, cap. 10–14.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 13, cap. 23.—Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. ii. fol. 306.—Father Sahagun has gone into many particulars of the Aztec *cuisine*, and the mode of preparing sundry savory messes, making, all together, no despicable contribution to the noble science of gastronomy.

They had a way of preparing the froth of it, so as to make it almost solid enough to be eaten, and took it cold.[46] The fermented juice of the maguey, with a mixture of sweets and acids, supplied, also, various agreeable drinks, of different degrees of strength, and formed the chief beverage of the elder part of the company.[47]

As soon as they had finished their repast, the young people rose from the table, to close the festivities of the day with dancing. They danced gracefully, to the sound of various instruments, accompanying their movements with chants of a pleasing though somewhat plaintive character.[48] The older guests continued at

[46] The froth, delicately flavored with spices and some other ingredients, was taken cold by itself. It had the consistency almost of a solid; and the "Anonymous Conqueror" is very careful to inculcate the importance of "opening the mouth wide, in order to facilitate deglutition, that the foam may dissolve gradually, and descend imperceptibly, as it were, into the stomach." It was so nutritious that a single cup of it was enough to sustain a man through the longest day's march. (Fol. 306.) The old soldier discusses the beverage *con amore*.

[47] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 4, cap. 37; lib. 8, cap. 13. —Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 13, cap. 23.—Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 306.

[48] Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 8.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 14, cap. 11.—The Mexican nobles entertained minstrels in their houses, who composed ballads suited to the times, or the achievements of their lord, which they chanted, to the accompaniment of instruments, at the festivals and dances. Indeed, there was more or less dancing at most of the festivals, and it was performed in the court-yards of the houses, or in the open squares of the city. (Ibid., ubi supra.) The principal men had, also, buffoons and jugglers in their service, who amused them and astonished the Spaniards by their feats of dexterity and strength (Acosta, lib. 6, cap. 23; also Clavigero (Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. pp. 179–186), who has designed several representations of their exploits, truly surprising.) It is natural

table, sipping *pulque*, and gossiping about other times, till the virtues of the exhilarating beverage put them in good humor with their own. Intoxication was not rare in this part of the company, and, what is singular, was excused in them, though severely punished in the younger. The entertainment was concluded by a liberal distribution of rich dresses and ornaments among the guests, when they withdrew, after midnight, "some commending the feast, and others condemning the bad taste or extravagance of their host; in the same manner," says an old Spanish writer, "as with us."[49] Human nature is, indeed, much the same all the world over.

In this remarkable picture of manners, which I have copied faithfully from the records of earliest date after the Conquest, we find no resemblance to the other races of North American Indians. Some resemblance we may trace to the general style of Asiatic pomp and luxury. But in Asia, woman, far from being admitted to unreserved intercourse with the other sex, is too often jealously immured within the walls of the harem. European civilization, which accords to this loveliest portion of creation her proper rank in the social scale, is still more removed from some of the brutish usages

that a people of limited refinement should find their enjoyment in material rather than intellectual pleasures, and, consequently, should excel in them. The Asiatic nations, as the Hindoos and Chinese, for example, surpass the more polished Europeans in displays of agility and legerdemain.

[49] "Y de esta manera pasaban gran rato de la noche, y se despedian, é iban á sus casas, unos alabando la fiesta, y otros murmurando de las demasías y excesos, cosa mui ordinaria en los que á semejantes actos se juntan." Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 13, cap. 23.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 9, cap. 10–14.

of the Aztecs. That such usages should have existed with the degree of refinement they showed in other things is almost inconceivable. It can only be explained as the result of religious superstition; superstition which clouds the moral perception, and perverts even the natural senses, till man, civilized man, is reconciled to the very things which are most revolting to humanity. Habits and opinions founded on religion must not be taken as conclusive evidence of the actual refinement of a people.

The Aztec character was perfectly original and unique. It was made up of incongruities apparently irreconcilable. It blended into one the marked peculiarities of different nations, not only of the same phase of civilization, but as far removed from each other as the extremes of barbarism and refinement. It may find a fitting parallel in their own wonderful climate, capable of producing, on a few square leagues of surface, the boundless variety of vegetable forms which belong to the frozen regions of the North, the temperate zone of Europe, and the burning skies of Arabia and Hindostan.

One of the works repeatedly consulted and referred to in this Introduction is Boturini's *Idea de una nueva Historia general de la América Septentrional.* The singular persecutions sustained by its author, even more than the merits of his book, have associated his name inseparably with the literary history of Mexico. The Chevalier Lorenzo Boturini Benaduci was a Milanese by birth, of an ancient family, and possessed of much learning. From Madrid, where he was residing, he passed over to New Spain, in 1735, on some business of the Countess of Santibañez, a lineal descendant of Montezuma. While employed on this, he visited the celebrated shrine of Our Lady of Guadaloupe,

and, being a person of devout and enthusiastic temper, was filled with the desire of collecting testimony to establish the marvellous fact of her apparition. In the course of his excursions, made with this view, he fell in with many relics of Aztec antiquity, and conceived—what to a Protestant, at least, would seem much more rational—the idea of gathering together all the memorials he could meet with of the primitive civilization of the land.

In pursuit of this double object, he penetrated into the remotest parts of the country, living much with the natives, passing his nights sometimes in their huts, sometimes in caves and the depths of the lonely forests. Frequently months would elapse without his being able to add anything to his collection; for the Indians had suffered too much not to be very shy of Europeans. His long intercourse with them, however, gave him ample opportunity to learn their language and popular traditions, and, in the end, to amass a large stock of materials, consisting of hieroglyphical charts on cotton, skins, and the fibre of the maguey; besides a considerable body of Indian manuscripts, written after the Conquest. To all these must be added the precious documents for placing beyond controversy the miraculous apparition of the Virgin. With this treasure he returned, after a pilgrimage of eight years, to the capital.

His zeal, in the mean while, had induced him to procure from Rome a bull authorizing the coronation of the sacred image at Guadaloupe. The bull, however, though sanctioned by the Audience of New Spain, had never been approved by the Council of the Indies. In consequence of this informality, Boturini was arrested in the midst of his proceedings, his papers were taken from him, and, as he declined to give an inventory of them, he was thrown into prison, and confined in the same apartment with two criminals! Not long afterward he was sent to Spain. He there presented a memorial to the Council of the Indies, setting forth his manifold grievances, and soliciting redress. At the same time, he drew up his "Idea," above noticed, in which he displayed the catalogue of his *museum* in New Spain, declaring, with affecting earnestness, that "he would not exchange these treasures for all the gold and silver, diamonds and pearls, in the New World."

After some delay, the Council gave an award in his favor; acquitting him of any intentional violation of the law, and pronouncing a high encomium on his deserts. His papers, however, were not restored. But his Majesty was graciously pleased to appoint him Historiographer-General of the Indies, with a salary of one thousand dollars

per annum. The stipend was too small to allow him to return to Mexico. He remained in Madrid, and completed there the first volume of a "General History of North America," in 1749. Not long after this event, and before the publication of the work, he died. The same injustice was continued to his heirs; and, notwithstanding repeated applications in their behalf, they were neither put in possession of their unfortunate kinsman's collection, nor received a remuneration for it. What was worse,—as far as the public was concerned,—the collection itself was deposited in apartments of the vice-regal palace at Mexico, so damp that they gradually fell to pieces, and the few remaining were still further diminished by the pilfering of *the curious*. When Baron Humboldt visited Mexico, not one-eighth of this inestimable treasure was in existence!

I have been thus particular in the account of the unfortunate Boturini, as affording, on the whole, the most remarkable example of the serious obstacles and persecutions which literary enterprise, directed in the path of the national antiquities, has, from some cause or other, been exposed to in New Spain.

Boturini's manuscript volume was never printed, and probably never will be, if indeed it is in existence. This will scarcely prove a great detriment to science or to his own reputation. He was a man of a zealous temper, strongly inclined to the marvellous, with little of that acuteness requisite for penetrating the tangled mazes of antiquity, or of the philosophic spirit fitted for calmly weighing its doubts and difficulties. His "Idea" affords a sample of his peculiar mind. With abundant learning, ill assorted and ill digested, it is a jumble of fact and puerile fiction, interesting details, crazy dreams, and fantastic theories. But it is hardly fair to judge by the strict rules of criticism a work which, put together hastily, as a catalogue of literary treasures, was designed by the author rather to show what might be done, than that he could do it himself. It is rare that talents for action and contemplation are united in the same individual. Boturini was eminently qualified, by his enthusiasm and perseverance, for collecting the materials necessary to illustrate the antiquities of the country. It requires a more highly gifted mind to avail itself of them.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TEZCUCANS.—THEIR GOLDEN AGE.—ACCOMPLISHED PRINCES.—DECLINE OF THEIR MONARCHY.

THE reader would gather but an imperfect notion of the civilization of Anahuac, without some account of the Acolhuans, or Tezcucans, as they are usually called; a nation of the same great family with the Aztecs, whom they rivalled in power and surpassed in intellectual culture and the arts of social refinement. Fortunately, we have ample materials for this in the records left by Ixtlilxochitl, a lineal descendant of the royal line of Tezcuco, who flourished in the century of the Conquest. With every opportunity for information he combined much industry and talent, and, if his narrative bears the high coloring of one who would revive the faded glories of an ancient but dilapidated house, he has been uniformly commended for his fairness and integrity, and has been followed without misgiving by such Spanish writers as could have access to his manuscripts.[1] I shall confine myself to the prominent features of the two reigns which may be said to embrace the golden age of Tezcuco, without attempting to weigh the probability of the details, which I will leave to be settled by the reader, according to the measure of his faith.

[1] For a criticism on this writer, see the Postscript to this chapter.

The Acolhuans came into the Valley, as we have seen, about the close of the twelfth century, and built their capital of Tezcuco on the eastern borders of the lake, opposite to Mexico. From this point they gradually spread themselves over the northern portion of Anahuac, when their career was checked by an invasion of a kindred race, the Tepanecs, who, after a desperate struggle, succeeded in taking their city, slaying their monarch, and entirely subjugating his kingdom.[2] This event took place about 1418; and the young prince, Nezahualcoyotl, the heir to the crown, then fifteen years old, saw his father butchered before his eyes, while he himself lay concealed among the friendly branches of a tree which overshadowed the spot.[3] His subsequent history is as full of romantic daring and perilous escapes as that of the renowned Scanderbeg or of the "young Chevalier."[4]

Not long after his flight from the field of his father's blood, the Tezcucan prince fell into the hands of his enemy, was borne off in triumph to his city, and was thrown into a dungeon. He effected his escape, however, through the connivance of the governor of the fortress, an old servant of his family, who took the place of the royal fugitive, and paid for his loyalty with his life. He was at length permitted, through

[2] See Chapter I. of this Introduction, p. 17.

[3] Ixtlilxochitl, Relaciones, MS., No. 9.—Idem, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 19.

[4] The adventures of the former hero are told with his usual spirit by Sismondi (Républiques Italiennes, chap. 79). It is hardly necessary, for the latter, to refer the English reader to Chambers's "History of the Rebellion of 1745;" a work which proves how thin is the partition in human life which divides romance from reality.

the intercession of the reigning family in Mexico, which was allied to him, to retire to that capital, and subsequently to his own, where he found a shelter in his ancestral palace. Here he remained unmolested for eight years, pursuing his studies under an old preceptor, who had had the care of his early youth, and who instructed him in the various duties befitting his princely station.[5]

At the end of this period the Tepanec usurper died, bequeathing his empire to his son, Maxtla, a man of fierce and suspicious temper. Nezahualcoyotl hastened to pay his obeisance to him, on his accession. But the tyrant refused to receive the little present of flowers which he laid at his feet, and turned his back on him in presence of his chieftains. One of his attendants, friendly to the young prince, admonished him to provide for his own safety, by withdrawing, as speedily as possible, from the palace, where his life was in danger. He lost no time, consequently, in retreating from the inhospitable court, and returned to Tezcuco. Maxtla, however, was bent on his destruction. He saw with jealous eye the opening talents and popular manners of his rival, and the favor he was daily winning from his ancient subjects.[6]

He accordingly laid a plan for making away with him at an evening entertainment. It was defeated by the vigilance of the prince's tutor, who contrived to mislead the assassins and to substitute another victim in the place of his pupil.[7] The baffled tyrant now threw

5 Ixtlilxochitl, Relaciones, MS., No. 10.

6 Idem, Relaciones, MS., No. 10.—Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 20–24.

7 Idem, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 25. The contrivance was effected

off all disguise, and sent a strong party of soldiers to Tezcuco, with orders to enter the palace, seize the person of Nezahualcoyotl, and slay him on the spot. The prince, who became acquainted with the plot through the watchfulness of his preceptor, instead of flying, as he was counselled, resolved to await his enemies. They found him playing at ball, when they arrived, in the court of his palace. He received them courteously, and invited them in, to take some refreshments after their journey. While they were occupied in this way, he passed into an adjoining saloon, which excited no suspicion, as he was still visible through the open doors by which the apartments communicated with each other. A burning censer stood in the passage, and, as it was fed by the attendants, threw up such clouds of incense as obscured his movements from the soldiers. Under this friendly veil he succeeded in making his escape by a secret passage, which communicated with a large earthen pipe formerly used to bring water to the palace.[8] Here he remained till nightfall, when, taking advantage of the obscurity, he found his way into the suburbs, and sought a shelter in the cottage of one of his father's vassals.

The Tepanec monarch, enraged at this repeated dis-

by means of an extraordinary personal resemblance of the parties; a fruitful source of comic—as every reader of the drama knows—though rarely of tragic interest.

[8] It was customary, on entering the presence of a great lord, to throw aromatics into the censer. "Hecho en el brasero incienso y copal, que era uso y costumbre donde estaban los Reyes y Señores, cada vez que los criados entraban con mucha reverencia y acatamiento echaban sahumerio en el brasero; y así con este perfume se obscurecia algo la sala." Ixtlilxochitl, Relaciones, MS., No. 11.

appointment, ordered instant pursuit. A price was set on the head of the royal fugitive. Whoever should take him, dead or alive, was promised, however humble his degree, the hand of a noble lady, and an ample domain along with it. Troops of armed men were ordered to scour the country in every direction. In the course of the search, the cottage in which the prince had taken refuge was entered. But he fortunately escaped detection by being hid under a heap of maguey fibres used for manufacturing cloth. As this was no longer a proper place of concealment, he sought a retreat in the mountainous and woody district lying between the borders of his own state and Tlascala.[9]

Here he led a wretched, wandering life, exposed to all the inclemencies of the weather, hiding himself in deep thickets and caverns, and stealing out, at night, to satisfy the cravings of appetite; while he was kept in constant alarm by the activity of his pursuers, always hovering on his track. On one occasion he sought refuge from them among a small party of soldiers, who proved friendly to him and concealed him in a large drum around which they were dancing. At another time he was just able to turn the crest of a hill as his enemies were climbing it on the other side, when he fell in with a girl who was reaping *chia*,—a Mexican plant, the seed of which was much used in the drinks of the country. He persuaded her to cover him up with the stalks she had been cutting. When his pursuers came up, and inquired if she had seen the fugitive, the girl coolly answered that she had, and pointed

[9] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 26.—Relaciones, MS., No. 11.—Veytia, Hist. antig., lib. 2, cap. 47.

out a path as the one he had taken. Notwithstanding the high rewards offered, Nezahualcoyotl seems to have incurred no danger from treachery, such was the general attachment felt to himself and his house. "Would you not deliver up the prince, if he came in your way?" he inquired of a young peasant who was unacquainted with his person. "Not I," replied the other. "What, not for a fair lady's hand, and a rich dowry beside?" rejoined the prince. At which the other only shook his head and laughed.[10] On more than one occasion his faithful people submitted to torture, and even to lose their lives, rather than disclose the place of his retreat.[11]

However gratifying such proofs of loyalty might be to his feelings, the situation of the prince in these mountain solitudes became every day more distressing. It gave a still keener edge to his own sufferings to witness those of the faithful followers who chose to accompany him in his wanderings. "Leave me," he would say to them, "to my fate! Why should you throw away your own lives for one whom fortune is never weary of persecuting?" Most of the great Tezcucan chiefs had consulted their interests by a timely adhesion to the usurper. But some still clung to their prince, preferring proscription, and death itself, rather than desert him in his extremity.[12]

[10] "Nezahualcoiotzin le dixo, que si viese á quien buscaban, si lo iría á denunciar? respondió, que no; tornándole á replicar diciéndole, que haria mui mal en perder una muger hermosa y lo demas que el rey Maxtla prometia, el mancebo se rió de todo, no haciendo caso ni de lo uno ni de lo otro." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 27.

[11] Ibid., MS., cap. 26, 27.—Relaciones, MS., No. 11.—Veytia, Hist. antig., lib. 2, cap. 47, 48.

[12] Ixtlilxochitl, MSS., ubi supra.—Veytia, ubi supra.

In the mean time, his friends at a distance were active in measures for his relief. The oppressions of Maxtla, and his growing empire, had caused general alarm in the surrounding states, who recalled the mild rule of the Tezcucan princes. A coalition was formed, a plan of operations concerted, and, on the day appointed for a general rising, Nezahualcoyotl found himself at the head of a force sufficiently strong to face his Tepanec adversaries. An engagement came on, in which the latter were totally discomfited; and the victorious prince, receiving everywhere on his route the homage of his joyful subjects, entered his capital, not like a proscribed outcast, but as the rightful heir, and saw himself once more enthroned in the halls of his fathers.

Soon after, he united his forces with the Mexicans, long disgusted with the arbitrary conduct of Maxtla. The allied powers, after a series of bloody engagements with the usurper, routed him under the walls of his own capital. He fled to the baths, whence he was dragged out, and sacrificed with the usual cruel ceremonies of the Aztecs; the royal city of Azcapozalco was razed to the ground, and the wasted territory was henceforth reserved as the great slave-market for the nations of Anahuac.[13]

These events were succeeded by the remarkable league among the three powers of Tezcuco, Mexico, and Tlacopan, of which some account has been given in a previous chapter.[14] Historians are not agreed as

[13] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 28–31.—Relaciones, MS., No. 11.—Veytia, Hist. antig., lib. 2, cap. 51–54.

[14] See page 21 of this volume.

to the precise terms of it; the writers of the two former nations each insisting on the paramount authority of his own in the coalition. All agree in the subordinate position of Tlacopan, a state, like the others, bordering on the lake. It is certain that in their subsequent operations, whether of peace or war, the three states shared in each other's councils, embarked in each other's enterprises, and moved in perfect concert together, till just before the coming of the Spaniards.

The first measure of Nezahualcoyotl, on returning to his dominions, was a general amnesty. It was his maxim "that a monarch might punish, but revenge was unworthy of him."[15] In the present instance he was averse even to punish, and not only freely pardoned his rebel nobles, but conferred on some, who had most deeply offended, posts of honor and confidence. Such conduct was doubtless politic, especially as their alienation was owing, probably, much more to fear of the usurper than to any disaffection towards himself. But there are some acts of policy which a magnanimous spirit only can execute.

The restored monarch next set about repairing the damages sustained under the late misrule, and reviving, or rather remodelling, the various departments of government. He framed a concise, but comprehensive, code of laws, so well suited, it was thought, to the exigencies of the times, that it was adopted as their own by the two other members of the triple alliance. It was written in blood, and entitled the author to be called the Draco rather than "the Solon of Anahuac,"

[15] "Que venganza no es justo la procuren los Reyes, sino castigar al que lo mereciere." MS. de Ixtlilxochitl.

as he is fondly styled by his admirers.[16] Humanity is one of the best fruits of refinement. It is only with increasing civilization that the legislator studies to economize human suffering, even for the guilty; to devise penalties not so much by way of punishment for the past as of reformation for the future.[17]

He divided the burden of government among a number of departments, as the council of war, the council of finance, the council of justice. This last was a court of supreme authority, both in civil and criminal matters, receiving appeals from the lower tribunals of the provinces, which were obliged to make a full report, every four months, or eighty days, of their own proceedings to this higher judicature. In all these bodies, a certain number of citizens were allowed to have seats with the nobles and professional dignitaries. There was, however, another body, a council of state, for aiding the king in the despatch of business, and advising him in matters of importance, which was drawn altogether from the highest order of chiefs. It consisted of fourteen members; and they had seats provided for them at the royal table.[18]

[16] See Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 247.—Nezahualcoyotl's code consisted of eighty laws, of which thirty-four only have come down to us, according to Veytia. (Hist. antig., tom. iii. p. 224, nota.) Ixtlilxochitl enumerates several of them. Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 38, and Relaciones, MS., Ordenanzas.

[17] Nowhere are these principles kept more steadily in view than in the various writings of our adopted countryman Dr. Lieber, having more or less to do with the theory of legislation. Such works could not have been produced before the nineteenth century.

[18] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 36.—Veytia, Hist. antig., lib. 3, cap. 7.—According to Zurita, the principal judges, at their general meetings every four months, constituted also a sort of parliament or

Lastly, there was an extraordinary tribunal, called the council of music, but which, differing from the import of its name, was devoted to the encouragement of science and art. Works on astronomy, chronology, history, or any other science, were required to be submitted to its judgment, before they could be made public. This censorial power was of some moment, at least with regard to the historical department, where the wilful perversion of truth was made a capital offence by the bloody code of Nezahualcoyotl. Yet a Tezcucan author must have been a bungler, who could not elude a conviction under the cloudy veil of hieroglyphics. This body, which was drawn from the best-instructed persons in the kingdom, with little regard to rank, had supervision of all the productions of art, and of the nicer fabrics. It decided on the qualifications of the professors in the various branches of science, on the fidelity of their instructions to their pupils, the deficiency of which was severely punished, and it instituted examinations of these latter. In short, it was a general board of education for the country. On stated days, historical compositions, and poems treating of moral or traditional topics, were recited before it by their authors. Seats were provided for the three crowned heads of the empire, who deliberated with the other members on the respective merits of the pieces, and distributed prizes of value to the successful competitors.[19]

córtes, for advising the king on matters of state. See his Rapport, p. 106; also *ante*, p. 33.

[19] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 36.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 137.—Veytia, Hist. antig., lib. 3, cap. 7.—"Concurrian á este consejo las tres cabezas del imperio, en ciertos dias, á

Such are the marvellous accounts transmitted to us of this institution; an institution certainly not to have been expected among the aborigines of America. It is calculated to give us a higher idea of the refinement of the people than even the noble architectural remains which still cover some parts of the continent. Architecture is, to a certain extent, a sensual gratification. It addresses itself to the eye, and affords the best scope for the parade of barbaric pomp and splendor. It is the form in which the revenues of a semi-civilized people are most likely to be lavished. The most gaudy and ostentatious specimens of it, and sometimes the most stupendous, have been reared by such hands. It is one of the first steps in the great march of civilization. But the institution in question was evidence of still higher refinement. It was a literary luxury, and argued the existence of a taste in the nation which relied for its gratification on pleasures of a purely intellectual character.

The influence of this academy must have been most propitious to the capital, which became the nursery not only of such sciences as could be compassed by the scholarship of the period, but of various useful and ornamental arts. Its historians, orators, and poets

oir cantar las poesías históricas antiguas y modernas, para instruirse de toda su historia, y tambien cuando habia algun nuevo invento en cualquiera facultad, para examinarlo, aprobarlo, ó reprobarlo. Delante de las sillas de los reyes habia una gran mesa cargada de joyas de oro y plata, pedrería, plumas, y otras cosas estimables, y en los rincones de la sala muchas de mantas de todas calidades, para premios de las habilidades y estímulo de los profesores, las cuales alhajas repartian los reyes, en los dias que concurrian, á los que se aventajaban en el ejercicio de sus facultades." Ibid.

were celebrated throughout the country.[20] Its archives, for which accommodations were provided in the royal palace, were stored with the records of primitive ages.[21] Its idiom, more polished than the Mexican, was, indeed, the purest of all the Nahuatlac dialects, and continued, long after the Conquest, to be that in which the best productions of the native races were composed. Tezcuco claimed the glory of being the Athens of the Western world.[22]

Among the most illustrious of her bards was the emperor himself,—for the Tezcucan writers claim this title for their chief, as head of the imperial alliance. He doubtless appeared as a competitor before that very academy where he so often sat as a critic. Many of his odes descended to a late generation, and are still preserved, perhaps, in some of the dusty repositories of Mexico or Spain.[23] The historian Ixtlilxochitl has

[20] Veytia, Hist. antig., lib. 3, cap. 7.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 247.—The latter author enumerates four historians, some of much repute, of the royal house of Tezcuco, descendants of the great Nezahualcoyotl. See his Account of Writers, tom. i. pp. 6–21.

[21] "En la ciudad de Tezcuco estaban los Archivos Reales de todas las cosas referidas, por haver sido la Metrópoli de todas las ciencias, usos, y buenas costumbres, porque los Reyes que fuéron de ella se preciáron de esto." (Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., Prólogo.) It was from the poor wreck of these documents, once so carefully preserved by his ancestors, that the historian gleaned the materials, as he informs us, for his own works.

[22] "Aunque es tenida la lengua Mejicana por materna, y la Tezcucana por mas cortesana y pulida." (Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.) "Tezcuco," says Boturini, "where the noblemen sent their sons to acquire the most polished dialect of the Nahuatlac language, and to study poetry, moral philosophy, the heathen theology, astronomy, medicine, and history." Idea, p. 142.

[23] "He composed sixty songs," says the author last quoted, "which

left a translation, in Castilian, of one of the poems of his royal ancestor. It is not easy to render his version into corresponding English rhyme, without the perfume of the original escaping in this double filtration.[24] They remind one of the rich breathings of Spanish-Arab poetry, in which an ardent imagination is tempered by a not unpleasing and moral melancholy.[25] But, though sufficiently florid in diction, they are generally free from the meretricious ornaments and hyperbole with which the minstrelsy of the East is usually tainted. They turn on the vanities and mutability of human life,—a topic very natural for a monarch who had himself experienced the strangest mutations of fortune. There is mingled in the lament of the Tezcucan bard, however, an Epicurean philosophy, which seeks relief from the fears of the future in the joys of the present. "Banish care," he says: "if there are bounds to pleasure, the saddest life must also have an end. Then weave the chaplet of flowers, and sing thy songs in praise of the all-powerful God; for the glory of this world soon fadeth away. Rejoice in the green freshness of thy spring; for the day will

have probably perished by the incendiary hands of the ignorant." (Idea, p. 79.) Boturini had translations of two of these in his museum (Catálogo, p. 8), and another has since come to light.

[24] Difficult as the task may be, it has been executed by the hand of a fair friend, who, while she has adhered to the Castilian with singular fidelity, has shown a grace and flexibility in her poetical movements which the Castilian version, and probably the Mexican original, cannot boast. See both translations in Appendix, Part 2, No. 2.

[25] Numerous specimens of this may be found in Condé's "Dominacion de los Árabes en España." None of them are superior to the plaintive strains of the royal Abderahman on the solitary palm-tree which reminded him of the pleasant land of his birth. See Parte 2, cap. 9.

come when thou shalt sigh for these joys in vain; when the sceptre shall pass from thy hands, thy servants shall wander desolate in thy courts, thy sons, and the sons of thy nobles, shall drink the dregs of distress, and all the pomp of thy victories and triumphs shall live only in their recollection. Yet the remembrance of the just shall not pass away from the nations, and the good thou hast done shall ever be held in honor. The goods of this life, its glories and its riches, are but lent to us, its substance is but an illusory shadow, and the things of to-day shall change on the coming of the morrow. Then gather the fairest flowers from thy gardens, to bind round thy brow, and seize the joys of the present ere they perish."[26]

[26] "Io tocaré cantando
El músico instrumento sonoroso,
Tú de flores gozando
Danza, y festeja á Dios que es poderoso;
O gozemos de esta gloria,
Porque la humana vida es transitoria."
MS. DE IXTLILXOCHITL.

The sentiment, which is common enough, is expressed with uncommon beauty by the English poet Herrick:

"Gather the rosebuds while you may;
Old Time is still a flying;
The fairest flower that blooms to-day
To-morrow may be dying."

And with still greater beauty, perhaps, by Racine:

"Rions, chantons, dit cette troupe impie,
De fleurs en fleurs, de plaisirs en plaisirs,
Promenons nos désirs.
Sur l'avenir insensé qui se fie.
De nos ans passagers le nombre est incertain.
Hâtons-nous aujourd'hui de jouir de la vie;
Qui sait si nous serons demain?"
ATHALIE, Acte 2.

It is interesting to see under what different forms the same senti-

But the hours of the Tezcucan monarch were not all passed in idle dalliance with the Muse, nor in the sober contemplations of philosophy, as at a later period. In the freshness of youth and early manhood he led the allied armies in their annual expeditions, which were certain to result in a wider extent of territory to the empire.[27] In the intervals of peace he fostered those productive arts which are the surest sources of public prosperity. He encouraged agriculture above all; and there was scarcely a spot so rude, or a steep so inaccessible, as not to confess the power of cultivation. The land was covered with a busy population, and towns and cities sprang up in places since deserted or dwindled into miserable villages.[28]

From resources thus enlarged by conquest and do-

ment is developed by different races and in different languages. It is an Epicurean sentiment, indeed, but its universality proves its truth to nature.

[27] Some of the provinces and places thus conquered were held by the allied powers in common; Tlacopan, however, only receiving one-fifth of the tribute. It was more usual to annex the vanquished territory to that one of the two great states to which it lay nearest. See Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 38.—Zurita, Rapport, p. 11.

[28] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 41. The same writer, in another work, calls the population of Tezcuco, at this period, double of what it was at the Conquest; founding his estimate on the royal registers, and on the numerous remains of edifices still visible in his day, in places now depopulated. "Parece en las historias que en este tiempo, antes que se destruyesen, havia doblado mas gente de la que halló al tiempo que vino Cortés, y los demas Españoles: porque yo hallo en los padrones reales, que el menor pueblo tenía 1100 vecinos, y de allí para arriba, y ahora no tienen 200 vecinos, y aun en algunas partes de todo punto se han acabado. . . . Como se hecha de ver en las ruinas, hasta los mas altos montes y sierras tenian sus sementeras, y casas principales para vivir y morar." Relaciones, MS., No. 9.

mestic industry, the monarch drew the means for the large consumption of his own numerous household,[29] and for the costly works which he executed for the convenience and embellishment of the capital. He filled it with stately edifices for his nobles, whose constant attendance he was anxious to secure at his court.[30] He erected a magnificent pile of buildings which might serve both for a royal residence and for the public offices. It extended, from east to west, twelve hundred and thirty-four yards, and from north to south, nine hundred and seventy-eight. It was encompassed by a wall of unburnt bricks and cement, six feet wide and nine high for one half of the circumference, and fifteen feet high for the other half. Within this enclosure were two courts. The outer one was used as the great market-place of the city, and continued to be so until long after the Conquest,—if, indeed, it is not now. The interior court was surrounded by the council-chambers and halls of justice. There were also accommodations there for the foreign ambassadors; and a spacious saloon, with apartments opening into

[29] Torquemada has extracted the particulars of the yearly expenditure of the palace from the royal account-book, which came into the historian's possession. The following are some of the items, namely: 4,900,300 fanegas of maize (the *fanega* is equal to about one hundred pounds); 2,744,000 fanegas of cacao; 8000 turkeys; 1300 baskets of salt; besides an incredible quantity of game of every kind, vegetables, condiments, etc. (Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 53.) See, also, Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 35.

[30] There were more than four hundred of these lordly residences: "Así mismo hizo edificar muchas casas y palacios para los señores y cavalleros, que asistian en su corte, cada uno conforme á la calidad y méritos de su persona, las quales llegáron á ser mas de quatrocientas casas de señores y cavalleros de solar conocido." Ibid., cap. 38.

it, for men of science and poets, who pursued their studies in this retreat or met together to hold converse under its marble porticoes. In this quarter, also, were kept the public archives, which fared better under the Indian dynasty than they have since under their European successors.[31]

Adjoining this court were the apartments of the king, including those for the royal harem, as liberally supplied with beauties as that of an Eastern sultan. Their walls were incrusted with alabasters and richly-tinted stucco, or hung with gorgeous tapestries of variegated feather-work. They led through long arcades, and through intricate labyrinths of shrubbery, into gardens where baths and sparkling fountains were overshadowed by tall groves of cedar and cypress. The basins of water were well stocked with fish of various kinds, and the aviaries with birds glowing in all the gaudy plumage of the tropics. Many birds and animals which could not be obtained alive were represented in gold and silver so skilfully as to have furnished the great naturalist Hernandez with models for his work.[32]

[31] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 36. "Esta plaza cercada de portales, y tenia así mismo por la parte del poniente otra sala grande, y muchos quartos á la redonda, que era la universidad, en donde asistian todos los poetas, históricos, y philósophos del reyno, divididos en sus claves, y academias, conforme era la facultad de cada uno, y así mismo estaban aquí los archivos reales."

[32] This celebrated naturalist was sent by Philip II. to New Spain, and he employed several years in compiling a voluminous work on its various natural productions, with drawings illustrating them. Although the government is said to have expended sixty thousand ducats in effecting this great object, the volumes were not published till long after the author's death. In 1651 a mutilated edition of the

Accommodations on a princely scale were provided for the sovereigns of Mexico and Tlacopan when they visited the court. The whole of this lordly pile contained three hundred apartments, some of them fifty yards square.[33] The height of the building is not mentioned. It was probably not great, but supplied the requisite room by the immense extent of ground which it covered. The interior was doubtless constructed of light materials, especially of the rich woods which, in that country, are remarkable, when polished, for the brilliancy and variety of their colors. That the more solid materials of stone and stucco were also liberally employed is proved by the remains at the present day; remains which have furnished an inexhaustible quarry for the churches and other edifices since erected by the Spaniards on the site of the ancient city.[34]

part of the work relating to medical botany appeared at Rome.—The original MSS. were supposed to have been destroyed by the great fire in the Escorial, not many years after. Fortunately, another copy, in the author's own hand, was detected by the indefatigable Muñoz, in the library of the Jesuits' College at Madrid, in the latter part of the last century; and a beautiful edition, from the famous press of Ibarra, was published in that capital, under the patronage of government, in 1790. (Hist. Plantarum, Præfatio.—Nic. Antonio, Bibliotheca Hispana Nova (Matriti, 1790), tom. ii. p. 432.) The work of Hernandez is a monument of industry and erudition, the more remarkable as being the first on this difficult subject. And, after all the additional light from the labors of later naturalists, it still holds its place as a book of the highest authority, for the perspicuity, fidelity, and thoroughness with which the multifarious topics in it are discussed.

33 Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 36.

34 "Some of the terraces on which it stood," says Mr. Bullock, speaking of this palace, "are still entire, and covered with cement, very hard, and equal in beauty to that found in ancient Roman build-

We are not informed of the time occupied in building this palace. But two hundred thousand workmen, it is said, were employed on it.[35] However this may be, it is certain that the Tezcucan monarchs, like those of Asia and ancient Egypt, had the control of immense masses of men, and would sometimes turn the whole population of a conquered city, including the women, into the public works.[36] The most gigantic monuments of architecture which the world has witnessed would never have been reared by the hands of freemen.

Adjoining the palace were buildings for the king's children, who, by his various wives, amounted to no less than sixty sons and fifty daughters.[37] Here they were instructed in all the exercises and accomplishments suited to their station; comprehending, what would scarcely find a place in a royal education on the other

ings. . . . The great church, which stands close by, is almost entirely built of the materials taken from the palace, many of the sculptured stones from which may be seen in the walls, though most of the ornaments are turned inwards. Indeed, our guide informed us that whoever built a house at Tezcuco made the ruins of the palace serve as his quarry." (Six Months in Mexico, chap. 26.) Torquemada notices the appropriation of the materials to the same purpose. Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 45.

35 Ixtlilxochitl, MS., ubi supra.

36 Thus, to punish the Chalcas for their rebellion, the whole population were compelled, women as well as men, says the chronicler so often quoted, to labor on the royal edifices for four years together; and large granaries were provided with stores for their maintenance in the mean time. Idem, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 46.

37 If the people in general were not much addicted to polygamy, the sovereign, it must be confessed,—and it was the same, we shall see, in Mexico,—made ample amends for any self-denial on the part of his subjects.

side of the Atlantic, the arts of working in metals, jewelry, and feather-mosaic. Once in every four months, the whole household, not excepting the youngest, and including all the officers and attendants on the king's person, assembled in a grand saloon of the palace, to listen to a discourse from an orator, probably one of the priesthood. The princes, on this occasion, were all dressed in *nequen*, the coarsest manufacture of the country. The preacher began by enlarging on the obligations of morality and of respect for the gods, especially important in persons whose rank gave such additional weight to example. He occasionally seasoned his homily with a pertinent application to his audience, if any member of it had been guilty of a notorious delinquency. From this wholesome admonition the monarch himself was not exempted, and the orator boldly reminded him of his paramount duty to show respect for his own laws. The king, so far from taking umbrage, received the lesson with humility; and the audience, we are assured, were often melted into tears by the eloquence of the preacher.[38] This curious scene may remind one of similar usages in the Asiatic and Egyptian despotisms, where the sovereign occasionally condescended to stoop from his pride of place and allow his memory to be refreshed with the conviction of his own mortality.[39] It soothed the feelings of the

[38] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 37.

[39] The Egyptian priests managed the affair in a more courtly style, and, while they prayed that all sorts of kingly virtues might descend on the prince, they threw the blame of actual delinquencies on his ministers; thus, "not by the bitterness of reproof," says Diodorus, "but by the allurements of praise, enticing him to an honest way of life." Lib. 1, cap. 70.

subject to find himself thus placed, though but for a moment, on a level with his king; while it cost little to the latter, who was removed too far from his people to suffer anything by this short-lived familiarity. It is probable that such an act of public humiliation would have found less favor with a prince less absolute.

Nezahualcoyotl's fondness for magnificence was shown in his numerous villas, which were embellished with all that could make a rural retreat delightful. His favorite residence was at Tezcotzinco, a conical hill about two leagues from the capital.[40] It was laid out in terraces, or hanging gardens, having a flight of steps five hundred and twenty in number, many of them hewn in the natural porphyry.[41] In the garden on the summit was a reservoir of water, fed by an aqueduct that was carried over hill and valley, for several miles, on huge buttresses of masonry. A large rock stood in the midst of this basin, sculptured with the hieroglyphics representing the years of Nezahualcoyotl's reign and his principal achievements in each.[42] On a lower level

[40] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 42.—See Appendix, Part 2, No. 3, for the original description of this royal residence.

[41] "Quinientos y veynte escalones." Davilla Padilla, Historia de la Provincia de Santiago (Madrid, 1596), lib. 2, cap. 81.—This writer, who lived in the sixteenth century, counted the steps himself. Those which were not cut in the rock were crumbling into ruins, as, indeed, every part of the establishment was even then far gone to decay.

[42] On the summit of the mount, according to Padilla, stood an image of a *coyotl*,—an animal resembling a fox,—which, according to tradition, represented an Indian famous for his fasts. It was destroyed by that stanch iconoclast, Bishop Zumárraga, as a relic of idolatry. (Hist. de Santiago, lib. 2, cap. 81.) This figure was, no doubt, the emblem of Nezahualcoyotl himself, whose name, as elsewhere noticed, signified "hungry fox."

were three other reservoirs, in each of which stood a marble statue of a woman, emblematic of the three states of the empire. Another tank contained a winged lion, (?) cut out of the solid rock, bearing in its mouth the portrait of the emperor.[43] His likeness had been executed in gold, wood, feather-work, and stone; but this was the only one which pleased him.

From these copious basins the water was distributed in numerous channels through the gardens, or was made to tumble over the rocks in cascades, shedding refreshing dews on the flowers and odoriferous shrubs below. In the depths of this fragrant wilderness, marble porticoes and pavilions were erected, and baths excavated in the solid porphyry, which are still shown by the ignorant natives as the "Baths of Montezuma"![44] The visitor descended by steps cut in the living stone and polished so bright as to reflect like mirrors.[45] Towards the base of the hill, in the midst of cedar groves, whose gigantic branches threw a

[43] "Hecho de una peña un leon de mas de dos brazas de largo con sus alas y plumas: estaba hechado y mirando á la parte del oriente, en cuia boca asomaba un rostro, que era el mismo retrato del Rey." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 42.

[44] Bullock speaks of a "beautiful basin, twelve feet long by eight wide, having a well five feet by four, deep in the centre," etc. etc. Whether truth lies in the bottom of this well is not so clear. Latrobe describes the baths as "two singular basins, perhaps two feet and a half in diameter, not large enough for any monarch bigger than Oberon to take a duck in." (Comp. Six Months in Mexico, chap. 26; and Rambler in Mexico, Let. 7.) Ward speaks much to the same purpose (Mexico in 1827 (London, 1828), vol. ii. p. 296), which agrees with verbal accounts I have received of the same spot.

[45] "Gradas hechas de la misma peña tan bien gravadas y lizas que parecian espejos." (Ixtlilxochitl, MS., ubi supra.) The travellers just cited notice the beautiful polish still visible in the porphyry.

refreshing coolness over the verdure in the sultriest seasons of the year,[46] rose the royal villa, with its light arcades and airy halls, drinking in the sweet perfumes of the gardens. Here the monarch often retired, to throw off the burden of state and refresh his wearied spirits in the society of his favorite wives, reposing during the noontide heats in the embowering shades of his paradise, or mingling, in the cool of the evening, in their festive sports and dances. Here he entertained his imperial brothers of Mexico and Tlacopan, and followed the hardier pleasures of the chase in the noble woods that stretched for miles around his villa, flourishing in all their primeval majesty. Here, too, he often repaired in the latter days of his life, when age had tempered ambition and cooled the ardor of his blood, to pursue in solitude the studies of philosophy and gather wisdom from meditation.

The extraordinary accounts of the Tezcucan architecture are confirmed, in the main, by the relics which still cover the hill of Tezcotzinco or are half buried beneath its surface. They attract little attention, indeed, in the country, where their true history has long since passed into oblivion;[47] while the traveller whose

[46] Padilla saw entire pieces of cedar among the ruins, ninety feet long and four in diameter. Some of the massive portals, he observed, were made of a single stone. (Hist. de Santiago, lib. 11, cap. 81.) Peter Martyr notices an enormous wooden beam, used in the construction of the palaces of Tezcuco, which was one hundred and twenty feet long by eight feet in diameter! The accounts of this and similar huge pieces of timber were so astonishing, he adds, that he could not have received them except on the most unexceptionable testimony. De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 10.

[47] It is much to be regretted that the Mexican government should not take a deeper interest in the Indian antiquities. What might not

curiosity leads him to the spot speculates on their probable origin, and, as he stumbles over the huge fragments of sculptured porphyry and granite, refers them to the primitive races who spread their colossal architecture over the country long before the coming of the Acolhuans and the Aztecs.[48]

The Tezcucan princes were used to entertain a great number of concubines. They had but one lawful wife, to whose issue the crown descended.[49] Nezahualcoyotl remained unmarried to a late period. He was disappointed in an early attachment, as the princess who had been educated in privacy to be the partner of his throne gave her hand to another. The injured monarch submitted the affair to the proper tribunal. The parties, however, were proved to have been ignorant of the destination of the lady, and the court, with an independence which reflects equal honor on the judges who could give and the monarch who could

be effected by a few hands drawn from the idle garrisons of some of the neighboring towns and employed in excavating this ground, "the Mount Palatine" of Mexico! But, unhappily, the age of violence has been succeeded by one of apathy.

[48] "They are doubtless," says Mr. Latrobe, speaking of what he calls "these inexplicable ruins," "rather of Toltec than Aztec origin, and, perhaps, with still more probability, attributable to a people of an age yet more remote." (Rambler in Mexico, Let. 7.) "I am of opinion," says Mr. Bullock, "that these were antiquities prior to the discovery of America, and erected by a people whose history was lost even before the building of the city of Mexico.—Who can solve this difficulty?" (Six Months in Mexico, ubi supra.) The reader who takes Ixtlilxochitl for his guide will have no great trouble in solving it. He will find here, as he might, probably, in some other instances, that one need go little higher than the Conquest for the origin of antiquities which claim to be coeval with Phœnicia and ancient Egypt.

[49] Zurita, Rapport, p. 12.

receive the sentence, acquitted the young couple. This story is sadly contrasted by the following.[50]

The king devoured his chagrin in the solitude of his beautiful villa of Tezcotzinco, or sought to divert it by travelling. On one of his journeys he was hospitably entertained by a potent vassal, the old lord of Tepechpan, who, to do his sovereign more honor, caused him to be attended at the banquet by a noble maiden, betrothed to himself, and who, after the fashion of the country, had been educated under his own roof. She was of the blood royal of Mexico, and nearly related, moreover, to the Tezcucan monarch. The latter, who had all the amorous temperament of the South, was captivated by the grace and personal charms of the youthful Hebe, and conceived a violent passion for her. He did not disclose it to any one, however, but, on his return home, resolved to gratify it, though at the expense of his own honor, by sweeping away the only obstacle which stood in his path.

He accordingly sent an order to the chief of Tepechpan to take command of an expedition set on foot against the Tlascalans. At the same time he instructed two Tezcucan chiefs to keep near the person of the old lord, and bring him into the thickest of the fight, where he might lose his life. He assured them this had been forfeited by a great crime, but that, from regard for his vassal's past services, he was willing to cover up his disgrace by an honorable death.

The veteran, who had long lived in retirement on his estates, saw himself with astonishment called so suddenly and needlessly into action, for which so

[50] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 43.

many younger men were better fitted. He suspected the cause, and, in the farewell entertainment to his friends, uttered a presentiment of his sad destiny. His predictions were too soon verified; and a few weeks placed the hand of his virgin bride at her own disposal.

Nezahualcoyotl did not think it prudent to break his passion publicly to the princess so soon after the death of his victim. He opened a correspondence with her through a female relative, and expressed his deep sympathy for her loss. At the same time, he tendered the best consolation in his power, by an offer of his heart and hand. Her former lover had been too well stricken in years for the maiden to remain long inconsolable. She was not aware of the perfidious plot against his life; and, after a decent time, she was ready to comply with her duty, by placing herself at the disposal of her royal kinsman.

It was arranged by the king, in order to give a more natural aspect to the affair and prevent all suspicion of the unworthy part he had acted, that the princess should present herself in his grounds at Tezcotzinco, to witness some public ceremony there. Nezahualcoyotl was standing in a balcony of the palace when she appeared, and inquired, as if struck with her beauty for the first time, "who the lovely young creature was, in his gardens." When his courtiers had acquainted him with her name and rank, he ordered her to be conducted to the palace, that she might receive the attentions due to her station. The interview was soon followed by a public declaration of his passion; and the marriage was celebrated not long after, with great

pomp, in the presence of his court, and of his brother monarchs of Mexico and Tlacopan.[51]

This story, which furnishes so obvious a counterpart to that of David and Uriah, is told with great circumstantiality, both by the king's son and grandson, from whose narratives Ixtlilxochitl derived it.[52] They stigmatize the action as the basest in their great ancestor's life. It is indeed too base not to leave an indelible stain on any character, however pure in other respects, and exalted.

The king was strict in the execution of his laws, though his natural disposition led him to temper justice with mercy. Many anecdotes are told of the benevolent interest he took in the concerns of his subjects, and of his anxiety to detect and reward merit, even in the most humble. It was common for him to ramble among them in disguise, like the celebrated caliph in the "Arabian Nights," mingling freely in conversation, and ascertaining their actual condition with his own eyes.[53]

On one such occasion, when attended only by a single lord, he met with a boy who was gathering sticks in a field for fuel. He inquired of him "why he did not go into the neighboring forest, where he would find a plenty of them." To which the lad answered, "It was the king's wood, and he would punish him with death if he trespassed there." The royal forests were

[51] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 43.

[52] Idem, ubi supra.

[53] "En traje de cazador (que lo acostumbraba á hacer muy de ordinario), saliendo á solas, y disfrazado para que no fuese conocido, á reconocer las faltas y necesidad que havia en la república para remediarlas." Idem, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 46.

very extensive in Tezcuco, and were guarded by laws full as severe as those of the Norman tyrants in England. "What kind of man is your king?" asked the monarch, willing to learn the effect of these prohibitions on his own popularity. "A very hard man," answered the boy, "who denies his people what God has given them."[54] Nezahualcoyotl urged him not to mind such arbitrary laws, but to glean his sticks in the forest, as there was no one present who would betray him. But the boy sturdily refused, bluntly accusing the disguised king, at the same time, of being a traitor, and of wishing to bring him into trouble.

Nezahualcoyotl, on returning to the palace, ordered the child and his parents to be summoned before him. They received the orders with astonishment, but, on entering the presence, the boy at once recognized the person with whom he had discoursed so unceremoniously, and he was filled with consternation. The good-natured monarch, however, relieved his apprehensions, by thanking him for the lesson he had given him, and, at the same time, commended his respect for the laws, and praised his parents for the manner in which they had trained their son. He then dismissed the parties with a liberal largess, and afterwards mitigated the severity of the forest laws, so as to allow persons to gather any wood they might find on the ground, if they did not meddle with the standing timber.[55]

Another adventure is told of him, with a poor wood-

[54] "Un hombresillo miserable, pues quita á los hombres lo que Dios á manos llenas les da." Ixtlilxochitl, loc. cit.

[55] Ibid., cap. 46.

man and his wife, who had brought their little load of billets for sale to the market-place of Tezcuco. The man was bitterly lamenting his hard lot, and the difficulty with which he earned a wretched subsistence, while the master of the palace before which they were standing lived an idle life, without toil, and with all the luxuries in the world at his command.

He was going on in his complaints, when the good woman stopped him, by reminding him he might be overheard. He was so, by Nezahualcoyotl himself, who, standing screened from observation at a latticed window which overlooked the market, was amusing himself, as he was wont, with observing the common people chaffering in the square. He immediately ordered the querulous couple into his presence. They appeared trembling and conscience-struck before him. The king gravely inquired what they had said. As they answered him truly, he told them they should reflect that, if he had great treasures at his command, he had still greater calls for them; that, far from leading an easy life, he was oppressed with the whole burden of government; and concluded by admonishing them "to be more cautious in future, as walls had ears."[56] He then ordered his officers to bring a quantity of cloth and a generous supply of cacao (the coin of the country), and dismissed them. "Go," said he; "with the little you now have, you will be rich; while, with all my riches, I shall still be poor." [57]

[56] "Porque las paredes oian." (Ixtlilxochitl, loc. cit.) A European proverb among the American aborigines looks too strange not to make one suspect the hand of the chronicler.

[57] "Le dijo, que con aquello poco le bastaba, y viviria bien aventu-

It was not his passion to hoard. He dispensed his revenues munificently, seeking out poor but meritorious objects on whom to bestow them. He was particularly mindful of disabled soldiers, and those who had in any way sustained loss in the public service, and, in case of their death, extended assistance to their surviving families. Open mendicity was a thing he would never tolerate, but chastised it with exemplary rigor.[58]

It would be incredible that a man of the enlarged mind and endowments of Nezahualcoyotl should acquiesce in the sordid superstitions of his countrymen, and still more in the sanguinary rites borrowed by them from the Aztecs. In truth, his humane temper shrunk from these cruel ceremonies, and he strenuously endeavored to recall his people to the more pure and simple worship of the ancient Toltecs. A circumstance produced a temporary change in his conduct.

He had been married some years to the wife he had so unrighteously obtained, but was not blessed with issue. The priests represented that it was owing to his neglect of the gods of his country, and that his only remedy was to propitiate them by human sacrifice. The king reluctantly consented, and the altars once more smoked with the blood of slaughtered captives. But it was all in vain; and he indignantly exclaimed, "These idols of wood and stone can neither hear nor feel; much less could they make the heavens, and the earth, and man, the lord of it. These must

rado; y él, con toda la máquina que le parecia que tenia arto, no tenia nada; y así lo despidió." Ixtlilxochitl, loc. cit.

[58] Ibid.

be the work of the all-powerful, unknown God, Creator of the universe, on whom alone I must rely for consolation and support." [59]

He then withdrew to his rural palace of Tezcotzinco, where he remained forty days, fasting and praying at stated hours, and offering up no other sacrifice than the sweet incense of copal, and aromatic herbs and gums. At the expiration of this time, he is said to have been comforted by a vision assuring him of the success of his petition. At all events, such proved to be the fact; and this was followed by the cheering intelligence of the triumph of his arms in a quarter where he had lately experienced some humiliating reverses.[60]

Greatly strengthened in his former religious convictions, he now openly professed his faith, and was more earnest to wean his subjects from their degrading superstitions and to substitute nobler and more spiritual conceptions of the Deity. He built a temple in the usual pyramidal form, and on the summit a tower nine stories high, to represent the nine heavens; a tenth was surmounted by a roof painted black, and profusely

[59] "Verdaderamente los Dioses que io adoro, que son ídolos de piedra que no hablan, ni sienten, no pudiéron hacer ni formar la hermosura del cielo, el sol, luna, y estrellas que lo hermosean, y dan luz á la tierra, rios, aguas y fuentes, árboles, y plantas que la hermosean, las gentes que la poseen, y todo lo criado; algun Dios muy poderoso, oculto, y no conocido es el Criador de todo el universo. El solo es él que puede consolarme en mi afliccion, y socorrerme en tan grande angustia como mi corazon siente." MS. de Ixtlilxochitl.

[60] MS. de Ixtlilxochitl.—The manuscript here quoted is one of the many left by the author on the antiquities of his country, and forms part of a voluminous compilation made in Mexico by Father Vega, in 1792, by order of the Spanish government. See Appendix, Part 2, No. 2.

gilded with stars, on the outside, and incrusted with metals and precious stones within. He dedicated this to "*the unknown God, the Cause of causes.*"[61] It seems probable, from the emblem on the tower, as well as from the complexion of his verses, as we shall see, that he mingled with his reverence for the Supreme the astral worship which existed among the Toltecs.[62] Various musical instruments were placed on the top of the tower, and the sound of them, accompanied by the ringing of a sonorous metal struck by a mallet, summoned the worshippers to prayers, at regular seasons.[63] No image was allowed in the edifice, as unsuited to the "invisible God;" and the people were expressly prohibited from profaning the altars with blood, or any other sacrifices than that of the perfume of flowers and sweet-scented gums.

The remainder of his days was chiefly spent in his delicious solitudes of Tezcotzinco, where he devoted himself to astronomical and, probably, astrological studies, and to meditation on his immortal destiny,—giving utterance to his feelings in songs, or rather hymns, of much solemnity and pathos. An extract

[61] "Al Dios no conocido, causa de las causas." MS. de Ixtlilxochitl.

[62] Their earliest temples were dedicated to the sun. The moon they worshipped as his wife, and the stars as his sisters. (Veytia, Hist. antig., tom. i. cap. 25.) The ruins still existing at Teotihuacan, about seven leagues from Mexico, are supposed to have been temples raised by this ancient people in honor of the two great deities. Boturini, Idea, p. 42.

[63] MS. de Ixtlilxochitl.—"This was evidently a *gong*," says Mr. Ranking, who treads with enviable confidence over the "supposito cineres," in the path of the antiquary. See his Historical Researches on the Conquest of Peru, Mexico, etc., by the Mongols (London, 1827), p. 310.

from one of these will convey some idea of his religious speculations. The pensive tenderness of the verses quoted in a preceding page is deepened here into a mournful, and even gloomy, coloring; while the wounded spirit, instead of seeking relief in the convivial sallies of a young and buoyant temperament, turns for consolation to the world beyond the grave:

"All things on earth have their term, and, in the most joyous career of their vanity and splendor, their strength fails, and they sink into the dust. All the round world is but a sepulchre; and there is nothing which lives on its surface that shall not be hidden and entombed beneath it. Rivers, torrents, and streams move onward to their destination. Not one flows back to its pleasant source. They rush onward, hastening to bury themselves in the deep bosom of the ocean. The things of yesterday are no more to-day; and the things of to-day shall cease, perhaps, on the morrow.[64] The cemetery is full of the loathsome dust of bodies once quickened by living souls, who occupied thrones, presided over assemblies, marshalled armies, subdued provinces, arrogated to themselves worship, were puffed up with vain-glorious pomp, and power, and empire.

"But these glories have all passed away, like the fearful smoke that issues from the throat of Popo-

[64] "Toda la redondez de la tierra es un sepulcro: no hay cosa que sustente que con título de piedad no la esconda y entierre. Corren los rios, los arroyos, las fuentes, y las aguas, y ningunas retroceden para sus alegres nacimientos: aceléranse con ansia para los vastos dominios de Tlulóca [Neptuno], y cuanto mas se arriman á sus dilatadas márgenes, tanto mas van labrando las melancólicas urnas para sepultarse. Lo que fué ayer no es hoy, ni lo de hoy se afianza que será mañana."

catepetl, with no other memorial of their existence than the record on the page of the chronicler.

"The great, the wise, the valiant, the beautiful,—alas! where are they now? They are all mingled with the clod; and that which has befallen them shall happen to us, and to those that come after us. Yet let us take courage, illustrious nobles and chieftains, true friends and loyal subjects,—*let us aspire to that heaven where all is eternal and corruption cannot come.*[65] The horrors of the tomb are but the cradle of the Sun, and the dark shadows of death are brilliant lights for the stars."[66] The mystic import of the last sentence seems to point to that superstition respecting the mansions of the Sun, which forms so beautiful a contrast to the dark features of the Aztec mythology.

At length, about the year 1470,[67] Nezahualcoyotl,

[65] "Aspiremos al cielo, que allí todo es eterno y nada se corrompe."

[66] "El horror del sepulcro es lisongera cuna para él, y las funestas sombras, brillantes luces para los astros."—The original text and a Spanish translation of this poem first appeared, I believe, in a work of Granados y Galvez. (Tardes Americanas (México, 1778), p. 90, et seq.) The original is in the Otomi tongue, and both, together with a French version, have been inserted by M. Ternaux-Compans in the Appendix to his translation of Ixtlilxochitl's Hist. des Chichimèques (tom. i. pp. 359-367.) Bustamante, who has, also, published the Spanish version in his Galería de antiguos Príncipes Mejicanos (Puebla, 1821 (pp. 16, 17),), calls it the "Ode of the Flower," which was recited at a banquet of the great Tezcucan nobles. If this last, however, be the same mentioned by Torquemada (Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 45), it must have been written in the Tezcucan tongue; and, indeed, it is not probable that the Otomi, an Indian dialect, so distinct from the languages of Anahuac, however well understood by the royal poet, could have been comprehended by a miscellaneous audience of his countrymen.

[67] An approximation to a date is the most one can hope to arrive at with Ixtlilxochitl, who has entangled his chronology in a manner

full of years and honors, felt himself drawing near his end. Almost half a century had elapsed since he mounted the throne of Tezcuco. He had found his kingdom dismembered by faction and bowed to the dust beneath the yoke of a foreign tyrant. He had broken that yoke; had breathed new life into the nation, renewed its ancient institutions, extended wide its domain; had seen it flourishing in all the activity of trade and agriculture, gathering strength from its enlarged resources, and daily advancing higher and higher in the great march of civilization. All this he had seen, and might fairly attribute no small portion of it to his own wise and beneficent rule. His long and glorious day was now drawing to its close; and he contemplated the event with the same serenity which he had shown under the clouds of its morning and in its meridian splendor.

A short time before his death, he gathered around him those of his children in whom he most confided, his chief counsellors, the ambassadors of Mexico and Tlacopan, and his little son, the heir to the crown, his only offspring by the queen. He was then not eight years old, but had already given, as far as so tender a blossom might, the rich promise of future excellence.[68]

After tenderly embracing the child, the dying monarch threw over him the robes of sovereignty. He then gave audience to the ambassadors, and, when they

beyond my skill to unravel. Thus, after telling us that Nezahualcoyotl was fifteen years old when his father was slain in 1418, he says he died at the age of seventy-one, in 1462. *Instar omnium.* Comp. Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 18, 19, 49.

[68] MS. de Ixtlilxochitl,—also Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 49.

had retired, made the boy repeat the substance of the conversation. He followed this by such counsels as were suited to his comprehension, and which, when remembered through the long vista of after-years, would serve as lights to guide him in his government of the kingdom. He besought him not to neglect the worship of "the unknown God," regretting that he himself had been unworthy to know him, and intimating his conviction that the time would come when he should be known and worshipped throughout the land.[69]

He next addressed himself to that one of his sons in whom he placed the greatest trust, and whom he had selected as the guardian of the realm. "From this hour," said he to him, "you will fill the place that I have filled, of father to this child; you will teach him to live as he ought; and by your counsels he will rule over the empire. Stand in his place, and be his guide, till he shall be of age to govern for himself." Then, turning to his other children, he admonished them to live united with one another, and to show all loyalty to their prince, who, though a child, already manifested a discretion far above his years. "Be true to him," he added, "and he will maintain you in your rights and dignities." [70]

Feeling his end approaching, he exclaimed, "Do not bewail me with idle lamentations. But sing the

[69] "No consentiendo que haya sacrificios de gente humana, que Dios se enoja de ello, castigando con rigor á los que lo hicieren; que el dolor que llevo es no tener luz, ni conocimiento, ni ser merecedor de conocer tan gran Dios, el qual tengo por cierto que ya que los presentes no lo conozcan, *ha de venir tiempo en que sea conocido y adorado en esta tierra.*" MS. de Ixtlilxochitl.

[70] Idem, ubi supra; also Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 49.

song of gladness, and show a courageous spirit, that the nations I have subdued may not believe you disheartened, but may feel that each one of you is strong enough to keep them in obedience!" The undaunted spirit of the monarch shone forth even in the agonies of death. That stout heart, however, melted, as he took leave of his children and friends, weeping tenderly over them, while he bade each a last adieu. When they had withdrawn, he ordered the officers of the palace to allow no one to enter it again. Soon after, he expired, in the seventy-second year of his age, and the forty-third of his reign.[71]

Thus died the greatest monarch, and, if one foul blot could be effaced, perhaps the best, who ever sat upon an Indian throne. His character is delineated with tolerable impartiality by his kinsman, the Tezcucan chronicler: "He was wise, valiant, liberal; and, when we consider the magnanimity of his soul, the grandeur and success of his enterprises, his deep policy, as well as daring, we must admit him to have far surpassed every other prince and captain of this New World. He had few failings himself, and rigorously punished those of others. He preferred the public to his private interest; was most charitable in his nature, often buying articles, at double their worth, of poor and honest persons, and giving them away again to the sick and infirm. In seasons of scarcity he was particularly bountiful, remitting the taxes of his vassals, and supplying their wants from the royal granaries. He put no faith in the idolatrous worship of the country. He was well instructed in moral science, and sought, above

[71] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 49.

all things, to obtain light for knowing the true God. He believed in one God only, the Creator of heaven and earth, by whom we have our being, who never revealed himself to us in human form, nor in any other; with whom the souls of the virtuous are to dwell after death, while the wicked will suffer pains unspeakable. He invoked the Most High, as 'He by whom we live,' and 'Who has all things in himself.' He recognized the Sun for his father, and the Earth for his mother. He taught his children not to confide in idols, and only to conform to the outward worship of them from deference to public opinion.[72] If he could not entirely abolish human sacrifices, derived from the Aztecs, he at least restricted them to slaves and captives."[73]

I have occupied so much space with this illustrious prince that but little remains for his son and successor, Nezahualpilli. I have thought it better, in our narrow limits, to present a complete view of a single epoch, the most interesting in the Tezcucan annals, than to spread the inquiries over a broader but comparatively barren field. Yet Nezahualpilli, the heir to the crown, was a remarkable person, and his reign contains many incidents which I regret to be obliged to pass over in silence.[74]

[72] "Solia amonestar á sus hijos en secreto que no adorasen á aquellas figuras de ídolos, y que aquello que hiciesen en público fuese *solo por cumplimiento.*" Ixtlilxochitl.

[73] Idem, ubi supra.

[74] The name *Nezahualpilli* signifies "the prince for whom one has fasted,"—in allusion, no doubt, to the long fast of his father previous to his birth. (See Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 45.) I have explained the meaning of the equally euphonious name of his parent, Nezahualcoyotl. (*Ante*, ch. 4.) If it be true that

He had, in many respects, a taste similar to his father's, and, like him, displayed a profuse magnificence in his way of living and in his public edifices. He was more severe in his morals, and, in the execution of justice, stern even to the sacrifice of natural affection. Several remarkable instances of this are told; one, among others, in relation to his eldest son, the heir to the crown, a prince of great promise. The young man entered into a poetical correspondence with one of his father's concubines, the lady of Tula, as she was called, a woman of humble origin, but of uncommon endowments. She wrote verses with ease, and could discuss graver matters with the king and his ministers. She maintained a separate establishment, where she lived in state, and acquired, by her beauty and accomplishments, great ascendency over her royal lover.[75] With this favorite the prince carried on a correspondence in verse, — whether of an amorous nature does not appear. At all events, the offence was capital. It was submitted to the regular tribunal, who pronounced sentence of death on the unfortunate

"Cæsar or Epaminondas
Could ne'er without names have been known to us,"

it is no less certain that such names as those of the two Tezcucan princes, so difficult to be pronounced or remembered by a European, are most unfavorable to immortality.

[75] "De las concubinas la que mas privó con el rey fué la que llamaban la Señora de Tula, no por linage, sino porque era hija de un mercader, y era tan sabia que competia con el rey y con los mas sabios de su reyno, y era en la poesía muy aventajada, que con estas gracias y dones naturales tenia al rey muy sugeto á su voluntad de tal manera que lo que queria alcanzaba de él, y así vivia sola por sí con grande aparato y magestad en unos palacios que el rey le mandó edificar." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 57.

youth; and the king, steeling his heart against all entreaties and the voice of nature, suffered the cruel judgment to be carried into execution. We might, in this case, suspect the influence of baser passions on his mind, but it was not a solitary instance of his inexorable justice towards those most near to him. He had the stern virtue of an ancient Roman, destitute of the softer graces which make virtue attractive. When the sentence was carried into effect, he shut himself up in his palace for many weeks, and commanded the doors and windows of his son's residence to be walled up, that it might never again be occupied.[76]

Nezahualpilli resembled his father in his passion for astronomical studies, and is said to have had an observatory on one of his palaces.[77] He was devoted to war in his youth, but, as he advanced in years, resigned himself to a more indolent way of life, and sought his chief amusement in the pursuit of his favorite science, or in the soft pleasures of the sequestered gardens of Tezcotzinco. This quiet life was ill suited to the turbulent temper of the times, and of his Mexican rival, Montezuma. The distant provinces fell off from

[76] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 67.—The Tezcucan historian records several appalling examples of this severity,—one in particular, in relation to his guilty wife. The story, reminding one of the tales of an Oriental harem, has been translated for the Appendix, Part 2, No. 4. See also Torquemada (Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 66), and Zurita (Rapport, pp. 108, 109). He was the terror, in particular, of all unjust magistrates. They had little favor to expect from the man who could stifle the voice of nature in his own bosom in obedience to the laws. As Suetonius said of a prince who had not his virtue, "Vehemens et in coercendis quidem delictis immodicus." Vita Galbæ, sec. 9.

[77] Torquemada saw the remains of this, *or what passed for such*, in his day. Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 64.

their allegiance; the army relaxed its discipline; disaffection crept into its ranks; and the wily Montezuma, partly by violence, and partly by stratagems unworthy of a king, succeeded in plundering his brother monarch of some of his most valuable domains. Then it was that he arrogated to himself the title and supremacy of emperor, hitherto borne by the Tezcucan princes as head of the alliance. Such is the account given by the historians of that nation, who in this way explain the acknowledged superiority of the Aztec sovereign, both in territory and consideration, on the landing of the Spaniards.[78]

These misfortunes pressed heavily on the spirits of Nezahualpilli. Their effect was increased by certain gloomy prognostics of a near calamity which was to overwhelm the country.[79] He withdrew to his retreat, to brood in secret over his sorrows. His health rapidly declined; and in the year 1515, at the age of fifty-two, he sank into the grave;[80] happy, at least, that by this timely death he escaped witnessing the fulfilment of his own predictions, in the ruin of his country, and the extinction of the Indian dynasties forever.[81]

[78] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 73, 74.—This sudden transfer of empire from the Tezcucans, at the close of the reigns of two of their ablest monarchs, is so improbable that one cannot but doubt if they ever possessed it,—at least, to the extent claimed by the patriotic historian. See *ante*, chap. 1, note 25, and the corresponding text.

[79] Ibid., cap. 72.—The reader will find a particular account of these prodigies, better authenticated than most miracles, in a future page of this History.

[80] Ibid., cap. 75.—Or, rather, at the age of fifty, if the historian is right in placing his birth, as he does in a preceding chapter, in 1465. (See cap. 46.) It is not easy to decide what is true, when the writer does not take the trouble to be true to himself.

[81] His obsequies were celebrated with sanguinary pomp. Two

In reviewing the brief sketch here presented of the Tezcucan monarchy, we are strongly impressed with the conviction of its superiority, in all the great features of civilization, over the rest of Anahuac. The Mexicans showed a similar proficiency, no doubt, in the mechanic arts, and even in mathematical science. But in the science of government, in legislation, in speculative doctrines of a religious nature, in the more elegant pursuits of poetry, eloquence, and whatever depended on refinement of taste and a polished idiom, they confessed themselves inferior, by resorting to their rivals for instruction and citing their works as the masterpieces of their tongue. The best histories, the best poems, the best code of laws, the purest dialect, were all allowed to be Tezcucan. The Aztecs rivalled their neighbors in splendor of living, and even in the magnificence of their structures. They displayed a pomp and ostentatious pageantry truly Asiatic. But this was the development of the material rather than the intellectual principle. They wanted the refinement of manners essential to a continued advance in civilization. An insurmountable limit was put to theirs by that bloody mythology which threw its withering taint over the very air that they breathed.

The superiority of the Tezcucans was owing, doubtless, in a great measure to that of the two sovereigns whose reigns we have been depicting. There is no

hundred male and one hundred female slaves were sacrificed at his tomb. His body was consumed, amidst a heap of jewels, precious stuffs, and incense, on a funeral pile; and the ashes, deposited in a golden urn, were placed in the great temple of Huitzilopochtli, for whose worship the king, notwithstanding the lessons of his father, had some partiality. Ixtlilxochitl.

position which affords such scope for ameliorating the condition of man as that occupied by an absolute ruler over a nation imperfectly civilized. From his elevated place, commanding all the resources of his age, it is in his power to diffuse them far and wide among his people. He may be the copious reservoir on the mountain-top, drinking in the dews of heaven, to send them in fertilizing streams along the lower slopes and valleys, clothing even the wilderness in beauty. Such were Nezahualcoyotl and his illustrious successor, whose enlightened policy, extending through nearly a century, wrought a most salutary revolution in the condition of their country. It is remarkable that we, the inhabitants of the same continent, should be more familiar with the history of many a barbarian chief, both in the Old and New World, than with that of these truly great men, whose names are identified with the most glorious period in the annals of the Indian races.

What was the actual amount of the Tezcucan civilization it is not easy to determine, with the imperfect light afforded us. It was certainly far below anything which the word conveys, measured by a European standard. In some of the arts, and in any walk of science, they could only have made, as it were, a beginning. But they had begun in the right way, and already showed a refinement in sentiment and manners, a capacity for receiving instruction, which, under good auspices, might have led them on to indefinite improvement. Unhappily, they were fast falling under the dominion of the warlike Aztecs. And that people repaid the benefits received from their more polished neighbors by imparting to them their own ferocious

superstition, which, falling like a mildew on the land, would soon have blighted its rich blossoms of promise and turned even its fruits to dust and ashes.

Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, who flourished in the beginning of the sixteenth century,* was a native of Tezcuco, and descended in a direct line from the sovereigns of that kingdom. The royal posterity became so numerous in a few generations that it was common to see them reduced to great poverty and earning a painful subsistence by the most humble occupations. Ixtlilxochitl, who was descended from the principal wife or queen of Nezahualpilli, maintained a very respectable position. He filled the office of interpreter to the viceroy, to which he was recommended by his acquaintance with the ancient hieroglyphics and his knowledge of the Mexican and Spanish languages. His birth gave him access to persons of the highest rank in his own nation, some of whom occupied important civil posts under the new government, and were thus enabled to make large collections of Indian manuscripts, which were liberally opened to him. He had an extensive library of his own, also, and with these means diligently pursued the study of the Tezcucan antiquities. He deciphered the hieroglyphics, made himself master of the songs and traditions, and fortified his narrative by the oral testimony of some very aged persons, who had themselves been acquainted with the Conquerors. From such authentic sources he composed various works in the Castilian, on the primitive history of the Toltec and the Tezcucan races, continuing it down to the subversion of the empire by Cortés. These various accounts, compiled under the title of *Relaciones*, are, more or less, repetitions and abridgments of each other; nor is it easy to understand why they were thus composed. The *Historia Chichimeca* is the best digested and most complete of the whole series, and as such has been the most frequently consulted for the preceding pages.

Ixtlilxochitl's writings have many of the defects belonging to his age. He often crowds the page with incidents of a trivial, and some-

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* [Ixtlilxochitl wrote in the early part of the seventeenth century. A certificate which he presented to the viceroy bears the date of November 18, 1608. The error is apparently a clerical one; though a previous passage in the text seems to indicate some confusion on the author's part.—ED.]

times improbable, character. The improbability increases with the distance of the period; for distance, which diminishes objects to the natural eye, exaggerates them to the mental. His chronology, as I have more than once noticed, is inextricably entangled. He has often lent a too willing ear to traditions and reports which would startle the more skeptical criticism of the present time. Yet there is an appearance of good faith and simplicity in his writings, which may convince the reader that when he errs it is from no worse cause than national partiality. And surely such partiality is excusable in the descendant of a proud line, shorn of its ancient splendors, which it was soothing to his own feelings to revive again—though with something more than their legitimate lustre—on the canvas of history. It should also be considered that, if his narrative is sometimes startling, his researches penetrate into the mysterious depths of antiquity, where light and darkness meet and melt into each other, and where everything is still further liable to distortion, as seen through the misty medium of hieroglyphics.*

With these allowances, it will be found that the Tezcucan historian has just claims to our admiration for the compass of his inquiries and the sagacity with which they have been conducted. He has introduced us to the knowledge of the most polished people of Anahuac, whose records, if preserved, could not, at a much later period, have been comprehended; and he has thus afforded a standard of comparison which much raises our ideas of American civilization. His language is simple, and, occasionally, eloquent and touching. His descriptions are highly picturesque. He abounds in familiar anecdote; and the natural graces of his manner, in detailing the more striking events of history and the personal adventures of his heroes, entitle him to the name of the Livy of Anahuac.

I shall be obliged to enter hereafter into his literary merits, in connection with the narrative of the Conquest; for which he is a prominent authority. His earlier annals—though no one of his manuscripts has been printed—have been diligently studied by the Spanish writers in Mexico, and liberally transferred to their pages; and his reputation,

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* [Señor Ramirez objects to this remark, on the ground that, however obscure the hieroglyphics may now seem, at the time of Ixtlilxochitl they were, in his language, "as plain as our letters to those who were acquainted with them." Notas y Esclarecimientos, p. 10.—ED.]

like Sahagun's, has doubtless suffered by the process. His *Historia Chichimeca* is now turned into French by M. Ternaux-Compans, forming part of that inestimable series of translations from unpublished documents which have so much enlarged our acquaintance with the early American history. I have had ample opportunity of proving the merits of his version of Ixtlilxochitl, and am happy to bear my testimony to the fidelity and elegance with which it is executed.

NOTE.—It was my intention to conclude this Introductory portion of the work with an inquiry into the *Origin of the Mexican Civilization.* "But the general question of the origin of the inhabitants of a continent," says Humboldt, "is beyond the limits prescribed to history; perhaps it is not even a philosophic question." "For the majority of readers," says Livy, "the origin and remote antiquities of a nation can have comparatively little interest." The criticism of these great writers is just and pertinent; and, on further consideration, I have thrown the observations on this topic, prepared with some care, into the Appendix (Part I); to which those who feel sufficient curiosity in the discussion can turn before entering on the narrative of the Conquest.

BOOK SECOND.

DISCOVERY OF MEXICO.

BOOK II.

DISCOVERY OF MEXICO.

CHAPTER I.

SPAIN UNDER CHARLES V.—PROGRESS OF DISCOVERY.—COLONIAL POLICY.—CONQUEST OF CUBA.—EXPEDITIONS TO YUCATAN.

1516–1518.

In the beginning of the sixteenth century, Spain occupied perhaps the most prominent position on the theatre of Europe. The numerous states into which she had been so long divided were consolidated into one monarchy. The Moslem crescent, after reigning there for eight centuries, was no longer seen on her borders. The authority of the crown did not, as in later times, overshadow the inferior orders of the state. The people enjoyed the inestimable privilege of political representation, and exercised it with manly independence. The nation at large could boast as great a degree of constitutional freedom as any other, at that time, in Christendom. Under a system of salutary laws and an equitable administration, domestic tranquillity was secured, public credit established, trade, manufactures, and even the more elegant arts, began to flourish; while a higher education called forth the

first blossoms of that literature which was to ripen into so rich a harvest before the close of the century. Arms abroad kept pace with arts at home. Spain found her empire suddenly enlarged by important acquisitions both in Europe and Africa, while a New World beyond the waters poured into her lap treasures of countless wealth and opened an unbounded field for honorable enterprise.

Such was the condition of the kingdom at the close of the long and glorious reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, when, on the 23d of January, 1516, the sceptre passed into the hands of their daughter Joanna, or rather their grandson, Charles the Fifth, who alone ruled the monarchy during the long and imbecile existence of his unfortunate mother. During the two years following Ferdinand's death, the regency, in the absence of Charles, was held by Cardinal Ximenes, a man whose intrepidity, extraordinary talents, and capacity for great enterprises were accompanied by a haughty spirit, which made him too indifferent as to the means of their execution. His administration, therefore, notwithstanding the uprightness of his intentions, was, from his total disregard of forms, unfavorable to constitutional liberty; for respect for forms is an essential element of freedom. With all his faults, however, Ximenes was a Spaniard; and the object he had at heart was the good of his country.

It was otherwise on the arrival of Charles, who, after a long absence, came as a foreigner into the land of his fathers. (November, 1517.) His manners, sympathies, even his language, were foreign, for he spoke the Castilian with difficulty. He knew little of his

native country, of the character of the people or their institutions. He seemed to care still less for them; while his natural reserve precluded that freedom of communication which might have counteracted, to some extent, at least, the errors of education. In everything, in short, he was a foreigner, and resigned himself to the direction of his Flemish counsellors with a docility that gave little augury of his future greatness.

On his entrance into Castile, the young monarch was accompanied by a swarm of courtly sycophants, who settled, like locusts, on every place of profit and honor throughout the kingdom. A Fleming was made grand chancellor of Castile; another Fleming was placed in the archiepiscopal see of Toledo. They even ventured to profane the sanctity of the córtes, by intruding themselvès on its deliberations. Yet that body did not tamely submit to these usurpations, but gave vent to its indignation in tones becoming the representatives of a free people.[1]

[1] The following passage — one among many — from that faithful mirror of the times, Peter Martyr's correspondence, does ample justice to the intemperance, avarice, and intolerable arrogance of the Flemings. The testimony is worth the more, as coming from one who, though resident in Spain, was not a Spaniard. "Crumenas auro fulcire inhiant; huic uni studio invigilant. Nec detrectat juvenis Rex. Farcit quacunque posse datur; non satiat tamen. Quæ qualisve sit gens hæc, depingere adhuc nescio. Insufflat vulgus hic in omne genus hominum non arctoum. Minores faciunt Hispanos, quam si nati essent inter eorum cloacas. Rugiunt jam Hispani, labra mordent, submurmurant taciti, fatorum vices tales esse conqueruntur, quod ipsi domitores regnorum ita floccifiant ab his, quorum Deus unicus (sub rege temperato) Bacchus est cum Citherea." Opus Epistolarum (Amstelodami, 1610), ep. 608.

The deportment of Charles, so different from that to which the Spaniards had been accustomed under the benign administration of Ferdinand and Isabella, closed all hearts against him; and, as his character came to be understood, instead of the spontaneous outpourings of loyalty which usually greet the accession of a new and youthful sovereign, he was everywhere encountered by opposition and disgust. In Castile, and afterwards in Aragon, Catalonia, and Valencia, the commons hesitated to confer on him the title of *King* during the lifetime of his mother; and, though they eventually yielded this point, and associated his name with hers in the sovereignty, yet they reluctantly granted the supplies he demanded, and, when they did so, watched over their appropriation with a vigilance which left little to gratify the cupidity of the Flemings. The language of the legislature on these occasions, though temperate and respectful, breathes a spirit of resolute independence not to be found, probably, on the parliamentary records of any other nation at that period. No wonder that Charles should have early imbibed a disgust for these popular assemblies,—the only bodies whence truths so unpalatable could find their way to the ears of the sovereign![2] Unfortunately, they had no influence on his conduct; till the discontent, long allowed to fester in

[2] Yet the nobles were not all backward in manifesting their disgust. When Charles would have conferred the famous Burgundian order of the Golden Fleece on the Count of Benavente, that lord refused it, proudly telling him, "I am a Castilian. I desire no honors but those of my own country, in my opinion quite as good as—indeed, better than—those of any other." Sandoval, Historia de la Vida y Hechos del Emperador Cárlos V. (Ambéres, 1681), tom. i. p. 103.

secret, broke out in that sad war of the *comunidades*, which shook the state to its foundations and ended in the subversion of its liberties.*

The same pestilent foreign influence was felt, though much less sensibly, in the colonial administration. This had been placed, in the preceding reign, under the immediate charge of the two great tribunals, the Council of the Indies, and the *Casa de Contratacion*, or India House, at Seville. It was their business to

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* [The tone of the preceding paragraphs is that of the Spanish chroniclers of the seventeenth century, and shows how the author, despite his natural candor and impartiality of mind, had acquired insensibly the habit of considering questions that affected Spain from the national point of view of the class of writers with whom his studies had made him most familiar. Spain is called the "native country" of Charles V., and the "land of his fathers," although, as hardly any reader will need to be reminded, he was born in the Netherlands and was of Spanish descent only on the maternal side. The term "foreigner" is applied to him as if it indicated some vicious trait in his nature; and the training which he had received as the heir to the Austro-Burgundian dominions is spoken of as erroneous, merely because it had not fitted him for a different position. His manners are contrasted with those of native Spanish sovereigns, as if wanting in graciousness and affability; yet the Spaniards, who alone ever made this complaint, recognized their own ideal of royal demeanor in that of the taciturn and phlegmatic Philip II. In like manner, Charles is supposed to have made his first acquaintance with free institutions on his arrival in Spain; whereas he had been brought up in a country where the power of the sovereign was perhaps more closely restricted by the chartered rights and immunities of the subject than was the case in any other part of Europe. That the union of Spain and the Netherlands was a most incongruous one, disastrous to the freedom, the independence, and the development of both countries, is undeniable; but it was not Charles's early partiality for the one, but his successor's far stronger partiality for the other, which rendered the incompatibility apparent and led to a rupture of the connection.—ED.]

further the progress of discovery, watch over the infant settlements, and adjust the disputes which grew up in them. But the licenses granted to private adventurers did more for the cause of discovery than the patronage of the crown or its officers. The long peace, enjoyed with slight interruption by Spain in the early part of the sixteenth century, was most auspicious for this; and the restless cavalier, who could no longer win laurels on the fields of Africa or Europe, turned with eagerness to the brilliant career opened to him beyond the ocean.

It is difficult for those of our time, as familiar from childhood with the most remote places on the globe as with those in their own neighborhood, to picture to themselves the feelings of the men who lived in the sixteenth century. The dread mystery which had so long hung over the great deep had, indeed, been removed. It was no longer beset with the same undefined horrors as when Columbus launched his bold bark on its dark and unknown waters. A new and glorious world had been thrown open. But as to the precise spot where that world lay, its extent, its history, whether it were island or continent,—of all this they had very vague and confused conceptions. Many, in their ignorance, blindly adopted the erroneous conclusion into which the great Admiral had been led by his superior science,—that the new countries were a part of Asia; and, as the mariner wandered among the Bahamas, or steered his caravel across the Caribbean Seas, he fancied he was inhaling the rich odors of the spice-islands in the Indian Ocean. Thus every fresh discovery, interpreted by this previous delusion, served

to confirm him in his error, or, at least, to fill his mind with new perplexities.

The career thus thrown open had all the fascinations of a desperate hazard, on which the adventurer staked all his hopes of fortune, fame, and life itself. It was not often, indeed, that he won the rich prize which he most coveted; but then he was sure to win the meed of glory, scarcely less dear to his chivalrous spirit; and, if he survived to return to his home, he had wonderful stories to recount, of perilous chances among the strange people he had visited, and the burning climes whose rank fertility and magnificence of vegetation so far surpassed anything he had witnessed in his own. These reports added fresh fuel to imaginations already warmed by the study of those tales of chivalry which formed the favorite reading of the Spaniards at that period. Thus romance and reality acted on each other, and the soul of the Spaniard was exalted to that pitch of enthusiasm which enabled him to encounter the terrible trials that lay in the path of the discoverer. Indeed, the life of the cavalier of that day was romance put into action. The story of his adventures in the New World forms one of the most remarkable pages in the history of man.

Under this chivalrous spirit of enterprise, the progress of discovery had extended, by the beginning of Charles the Fifth's reign, from the Bay of Honduras, along the winding shores of Darien, and the South American continent, to the Rio de la Plata. The mighty barrier of the Isthmus had been climbed, and the Pacific descried, by Nuñez de Balboa, second only to Columbus in this valiant band of "ocean chivalry."

The Bahamas and Caribbee Islands had been explored, as well as the Peninsula of Florida on the northern continent. This latter point had been reached by Sebastian Cabot in his descent along the coast from Labrador, in 1497. So that before 1518, the period when our narrative begins, the eastern borders of both the great continents had been surveyed through nearly their whole extent. The shores of the great Mexican Gulf, however, sweeping with a wide circuit far into the interior, remained still concealed, with the rich realms that lay beyond, from the eye of the navigator. The time had now come for their discovery.

The business of colonization had kept pace with that of discovery. In several of the islands, and in various parts of Terra Firma, and in Darien, settlements had been established, under the control of governors who affected the state and authority of viceroys. Grants of land were assigned to the colonists, on which they raised the natural products of the soil, but gave still more attention to the sugar-cane, imported from the Canaries. Sugar, indeed, together with the beautiful dye-woods of the country and the precious metals, formed almost the only articles of export in the infancy of the colonies, which had not yet introduced those other staples of the West Indian commerce which in our day constitute its principal wealth. Yet the precious metals, painfully gleaned from a few scanty sources, would have made poor returns, but for the gratuitous labor of the Indians.

The cruel system of *repartimientos*, or distribution of the Indians as slaves among the conquerors, had been suppressed by Isabella. Although subsequently

countenanced by the government, it was under the most careful limitations. But it is impossible to license crime by halves,—to authorize injustice at all, and hope to regulate the measure of it. The eloquent remonstrances of the Dominicans,—who devoted themselves to the good work of conversion in the New World with the same zeal that they showed for persecution in the Old,—but, above all, those of Las Casas, induced the regent, Ximenes, to send out a commission with full powers to inquire into the alleged grievances and to redress them. It had authority, moreover, to investigate the conduct of the civil officers, and to reform any abuses in their administration. This extraordinary commission consisted of three Hieronymite friars and an eminent jurist, all men of learning and unblemished piety.

They conducted the inquiry in a very dispassionate manner, but, after long deliberation, came to a conclusion most unfavorable to the demands of Las Casas, who insisted on the entire freedom of the natives. This conclusion they justified on the grounds that the Indians would not labor without compulsion, and that, unless they labored, they could not be brought into communication with the whites, nor be converted to Christianity. Whatever we may think of this argument, it was doubtless urged with sincerity by its advocates, whose conduct through their whole administration places their motives above suspicion. They accompanied it with many careful provisions for the protection of the natives. But in vain. The simple people, accustomed all their days to a life of indolence and ease, sank under the oppressions of their masters,

and the population wasted away with even more frightful rapidity than did the aborigines in our own country under the operation of other causes. It is not necessary to pursue these details further, into which I have been led by the desire to put the reader in possession of the general policy and state of affairs in the New World at the period when the present narrative begins.[3]

Of the islands, Cuba was the second discovered; but no attempt had been made to plant a colony there during the lifetime of Columbus, who, indeed, after skirting the whole extent of its southern coast, died in the conviction that it was part of the continent.[4] At length, in 1511, Diego, the son and successor of the "Admiral," who still maintained the seat of government in Hispaniola, finding the mines much exhausted there, proposed to occupy the neighboring island of Cuba, or Fernandina, as it was called in compliment to the Spanish monarch.[5] He prepared a small force

3 I will take the liberty to refer the reader who is desirous of being more minutely acquainted with the Spanish colonial administration and the state of discovery previous to Charles V., to the "History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella" (Part 2, ch. 9, 26), where the subject is treated *in extenso*.*

4 See the curious document attesting this, and drawn up by order of Columbus, ap. Navarrete, Coleccion de los Viages y de Descubrimientos (Madrid, 1825), tom. ii. Col. Dip., No. 76.

5 The island was originally called by Columbus Juana, in honor of

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* [All the documents relative to the commission sent out by Ximenes, including many reports from the commissioners, have been printed in the Col. de Doc. inéd. relativos al Descubrimiento, Conquista y Colonizacion de las Posesiones españolas en América y Oceanía, tom. i.—ED.]

for the conquest, which he placed under the command of Don Diego Velasquez; a man described by a contemporary as "possessed of considerable experience in military affairs, having served seventeen years in the European wars; as honest, illustrious by his lineage and reputation, covetous of glory, and somewhat more covetous of wealth."[6] The portrait was sketched by no unfriendly hand.

Velasquez, or rather his lieutenant, Narvaez, who took the office on himself of scouring the country, met with no serious opposition from the inhabitants, who were of the same family with the effeminate natives of Hispaniola. The conquest, through the merciful interposition of Las Casas, "the protector of the Indians," who accompanied the army in its march, was effected without much bloodshed. One chief, indeed, named Hatuey, having fled originally from St. Domingo to escape the oppression of its invaders, made a desperate resistance, for which he was condemned by Velasquez to be burned alive. It was he who made that memorable reply, more eloquent than a volume of invective. When urged at the stake to embrace Christianity, that his soul might find admission into heaven, he inquired if the white men would go there. On being answered in the affirmative, he exclaimed, "Then I will not be

Prince John, heir to the Castilian crown. After his death it received the name of Fernandina, at the king's desire. The Indian name has survived both. Herrera, Hist. general, Descrip., cap. 6.

[6] "Erat Didacus, ut hoc in loco de eo semel tantum dicamus, veteranus miles, rei militaris gnarus, quippe qui septem et decem annos in Hispania militiam exercitus fuerat, homo probus, opibus, genere et fama clarus, honoris cupidus, pecuniæ aliquanto cupidior." De Rebus gestis Ferdinandi Cortesii, MS.

a Christian; for I would not go again to a place where I must find men so cruel!"[7]

After the conquest, Velasquez, now appointed governor, diligently occupied himself with measures for promoting the prosperity of the island. He formed a number of settlements, bearing the same names with the modern towns, and made St. Jago, on the south-east corner, the seat of government.[8] He invited settlers by liberal grants of land and slaves. He encouraged them to cultivate the soil, and gave particular attention to the sugar-cane, so profitable an article of commerce in later times. He was, above all, intent on working the gold-mines, which promised better returns than those in Hispaniola. The affairs of his government did not prevent him, meanwhile, from casting many a wistful glance at the discoveries going forward on the continent, and he longed for an opportunity to embark in these golden adventures himself. Fortune gave him the occasion he desired.

An *hidalgo* of Cuba, named Hernandez de Cordova, sailed with three vessels on an expedition to one of the neighboring Bahama Islands, in quest of Indian slaves. (February 8, 1517.) He encountered a succession of heavy gales which drove him far out of his course, and

[7] The story is told by Las Casas in his appalling record of the cruelties of his countrymen in the New World, which charity—and common sense—may excuse us for believing the good father has greatly overcharged. Brevíssima Relacion de la Destruycion de las Indias (Venetia, 1643), p. 28.

[8] Among the most ancient of these establishments we find the Havana, Puerto del Príncipe, Trinidad, St. Salvador, and Matanzas, or *the Slaughter*, so called from a massacre of the Spaniards there by the Indians. Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 8.

at the end of three weeks he found himself on a strange and unknown coast. On landing and asking the name of the country, he was answered by the natives, "*Tectetan*," meaning "I do not understand you,"—but which the Spaniards, misinterpreting into the name of the place, easily corrupted into Yucatan. Some writers give a different etymology.[9] Such mistakes, however, were not uncommon with the early discoverers, and have been the origin of many a name on the American continent.[10]

Cordova had landed on the northeastern end of the peninsula, at Cape Catoche. He was astonished at the size and solid materials of the buildings, constructed of stone and lime, so different from the frail tenements of reeds and rushes which formed the habitations of the islanders. He was struck, also, with the higher cultivation of the soil, and with the delicate texture of the cotton garments and gold ornaments of the natives. Everything indicated a civilization far superior to any thing he had before witnessed in the New World. He saw the evidence of a different race, moreover, in the warlike spirit of the people. Rumors of the Spaniards had, perhaps, preceded them, as they were repeatedly

[9] Gomara, Historia de las Indias, cap. 52, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.—Bernal Diaz says the word came from the vegetable *yuca*, and *tale* the name for a hillock in which it is planted. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 6.) M. Waldeck finds a much more plausible derivation in the Indian word *Ouyouckatan*, "listen to what they say." Voyage pittoresque, p. 25.

[10] Two navigators, Solís and Pinzon, had descried the coast as far back as 1506, according to Herrera, though they had not taken possession of it. (Hist. general, dec. 1, lib. 6, cap. 17.) It is, indeed, remarkable it should so long have eluded discovery, considering that it is but two degrees distant from Cuba.

asked if they came from the east; and, wherever they landed, they were met with the most deadly hostility. Cordova himself, in one of his skirmishes with the Indians, received more than a dozen wounds, and one only of his party escaped unhurt. At length, when he had coasted the peninsula as far as Campeachy, he returned to Cuba, which he reached after an absence of several months, having suffered all the extremities of ill which these pioneers of the ocean were sometimes called to endure, and which none but the most courageous spirit could have survived. As it was, half the original number, consisting of one hundred and ten men, perished, including their brave commander, who died soon after his return. The reports he had brought back of the country, and, still more, the specimens of curiously wrought gold, convinced Velasquez of the importance of this discovery, and he prepared with all despatch to avail himself of it.[11]

He accordingly fitted out a little squadron of four vessels for the newly-discovered lands, and placed it under the command of his nephew, Juan de Grijalva, a man on whose probity, prudence, and attachment to himself he knew he could rely. The fleet left the port of St. Jago de Cuba, May 1, 1518.[12] It took the course

[11] Oviedo, General y natural Historia de las Indias, MS., lib. 33, cap. 1.—De Rebus gestis, MS.—Carta del Cabildo de Vera Cruz (July 10, 1519), MS.—Bernal Diaz denies that the original object of the expedition, in which he took part, was to procure slaves, though Velasquez had proposed it. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 2.) But he is contradicted in this by the other contemporary records above cited.

[12] Itinerario de la Isola de Iuchathan, novamente ritrovata per il Signor Joan de Grijalva, per il suo Capellano, MS.—The chaplain's word may be taken for the date, which is usually put at the eighth of April.

pursued by Cordova, but was driven somewhat to the south, the first land that it made being the island of Cozumel. From this quarter Grijalva soon passed over to the continent, and coasted the peninsula, touching at the same places as his predecessor. Everywhere he was struck, like him, with the evidences of a higher civilization, especially in the architecture; as he well might be, since this was the region of those extraordinary remains which have become recently the subject of so much speculation. He was astonished, also, at the sight of large stone crosses, evidently objects of worship, which he met with in various places. Reminded by these circumstances of his own country, he gave the peninsula the name of "New Spain," a name since appropriated to a much wider extent of territory.[13]

Wherever Grijalva landed, he experienced the same unfriendly reception as Cordova; though he suffered less, being better prepared to meet it. In the *Rio de Tabasco*, or *Grijalva*, as it is often called, after him, he held an amicable conference with a chief who gave him a number of gold plates fashioned into a sort of armor. As he wound round the Mexican coast, one of his captains, Pedro de Alvarado, afterwards famous in the Conquest, entered a river, to which he, also, left his own name. In a neighboring stream, called the *Rio de Vanderas*, or "River of Banners," from the ensigns displayed by the natives on its borders, Grijalva had the first communication with the Mexicans themselves.

The cacique who ruled over this province had received notice of the approach of the Europeans, and

[13] De Rebus gestis, MS.—Itinerario del Capellano, MS.

of their extraordinary appearance. He was anxious to collect all the information he could respecting them and the motives of their visit, that he might transmit them to his master, the Aztec emperor.[14] A friendly conference took place between the parties on shore, where Grijalva landed with all his force, so as to make a suitable impression on the mind of the barbaric chief. The interview lasted some hours, though, as there was no one on either side to interpret the language of the other, they could communicate only by signs. They, however, interchanged presents, and the Spaniards had the satisfaction of receiving, for a few worthless toys and trinkets, a rich treasure of jewels, gold ornaments and vessels, of the most fantastic forms and workmanship.[15]

Grijalva now thought that in this successful traffic—successful beyond his most sanguine expectations—he had accomplished the chief object of his mission. He steadily refused the solicitations of his followers to plant a colony on the spot,—a work of no little difficulty in so populous and powerful a country as this appeared to be. To this, indeed, he was inclined, but deemed it contrary to his instructions, which limited him to barter with the natives. He therefore despatched

[14] According to the Spanish authorities, the cacique was sent with these presents from the Mexican sovereign, who had received previous tidings of the approach of the Spaniards. I have followed Sahagun, who obtained his intelligence directly from the natives. Historia de la Conquista, MS., cap. 2.

[15] Gomara has given the *per* and *contra* of this negotiation, in which gold and jewels of the value of fifteen or twenty thousand *pesos de oro* were exchanged for glass beads, pins, scissors, and other trinkets common in an assorted cargo for savages. Crónica, cap. 6.

Alvarado in one of the caravels back to Cuba, with the treasure and such intelligence as he had gleaned of the great empire in the interior, and then pursued his voyage along the coast.

He touched at San Juan de Ulua, and at the *Isla de los Sacrificios*, so called by him from the bloody remains of human victims found in one of the temples. He then held on his course as far as the province of Panuco, where, finding some difficulty in doubling a boisterous headland, he returned on his track, and, after an absence of nearly six months, reached Cuba in safety. Grijalva has the glory of being the first navigator who set foot on the Mexican soil and opened an intercourse with the Aztecs.[16]

On reaching the island, he was surprised to learn that another and more formidable armament had been fitted out to follow up his own discoveries, and to find orders, at the same time, from the governor, couched in no very courteous language, to repair at once to St. Jago. He was received by that personage not merely with coldness, but with reproaches for having neglected so fair an opportunity of establishing a colony in the country he had visited. Velasquez was one of those captious spirits who, when things do not go exactly to their minds, are sure to shift the responsibility of the failure from their own shoulders, where it should lie, to those of others. He had an ungenerous nature, says an old writer, credulous, and easily moved to suspicion.[17] In the present instance it was most

[16] Itinerario del Capellano, MS.—Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.

[17] "Hombre de terrible condicion," says Herrera, citing the good Bishop of Chiapa, "para los que le servian, i aiudaban, i que facil-

unmerited. Grijalva, naturally a modest, unassuming person, had acted in obedience to the instructions of his commander, given before sailing, and had done this in opposition to his own judgment and the importunities of his followers. His conduct merited anything but censure from his employer.[18]

When Alvarado had returned to Cuba with his golden freight, and the accounts of the rich empire of Mexico which he had gathered from the natives, the heart of the governor swelled with rapture as he saw his dreams of avarice and ambition so likely to be realized. Impatient of the long absence of Grijalva, he despatched a vessel in search of him under the command of Olid, a cavalier who took an important part afterwards in the Conquest. Finally he resolved to fit out another armament on a sufficient scale to insure the subjugation of the country.

He previously solicited authority for this from the Hieronymite commission in St. Domingo. He then despatched his chaplain to Spain with the royal share of the gold brought from Mexico, and a full account of the intelligence gleaned there. He set forth his own manifold services, and solicited from the court full powers to go on with the conquest and colonization of the newly-discovered regions.[19] Before receiving an

mente se indignaba contra aquellos." Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 3, cap. 10.

[18] At least, such is the testimony of Las Casas, who knew both the parties well, and had often conversed with Grijalva upon his voyage. Historia general de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 113.

[19] Itinerario del Capellano, MS.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 113.—The most circumstantial account of Grijalva's expedition is to be found in the *Itinerary* of his chaplain above quoted.

answer, he began his preparations for the armament, and, first of all, endeavored to find a suitable person to share the expense of it and to take the command. Such a person he found, after some difficulty and delay, in Hernando Cortés; the man of all others best calculated to achieve this great enterprise,—the last man to whom Velasquez, could he have foreseen the results, would have confided it.

The original is lost, but an indifferent Italian version was published at Venice in 1522. A copy, which belonged to Ferdinand Columbus, is still extant in the library of the great church of Seville. The book had become so exceedingly rare, however, that the historiographer Muñoz made a transcript of it with his own hand; and from his manuscript that in my possession was taken.

CHAPTER II.

HERNANDO CORTÉS.—HIS EARLY LIFE.—VISITS THE NEW WORLD.—HIS RESIDENCE IN CUBA.—DIFFICULTIES WITH VELASQUEZ.—ARMADA INTRUSTED TO CORTÉS.

1518.

HERNANDO CORTÉS was born at Medellin, a town in the southeast corner of Estremadura,[1] in 1485.[2] He came of an ancient and respectable family; and historians have gratified the national vanity by tracing it up to the Lombard kings, whose descendants crossed the Pyrenees and established themselves in Aragon under the Gothic monarchy.[3] This royal genealogy was not

[1] [The house in which he was born, in the Calle de la Feria, was preserved until the present century, and many a traveller has lodged there, desirous, says Alaman, of sleeping in the mansion where the hero was born. In the year 1809 the building was destroyed by the French, and only a few fragments of wall now remain to commemorate the birthplace of the Conqueror. Alaman, Disertaciones históricas, tom. ii. p. 2.]

[2] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 1.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 203. I find no more precise notice of the date of his birth, except, indeed, by Pizarro y Orellana, who tells us "that Cortés came into the world the same day that that *infernal beast, the false heretic Luther*, entered it,—by way of compensation, no doubt, since the labors of the one to pull down the true faith were counterbalanced by those of the other to maintain and extend it"! (Varones ilustres del Nuevo-Mundo (Madrid, 1639), p. 66.) But this statement of the good cavalier, which places the birth of our hero in 1483, looks rather more like a zeal for "the true faith" than for historic.

[3] Argensola, in particular, has bestowed great pains on the *prosapia*

found out till Cortés had acquired a name which would confer distinction on any descent, however noble. His father, Martin Cortés de Monroy, was a captain of infantry, in moderate circumstances, but a man of unblemished honor; and both he and his wife, Doña Catalina Pizarro Altamirano, appear to have been much regarded for their excellent qualities.[4]

In his infancy Cortés is said to have had a feeble constitution, which strengthened as he grew older.[5] At fourteen, he was sent to Salamanca, as his father, who conceived great hopes from his quick and showy parts, proposed to educate him for the law, a profession which held out better inducements to the young aspirant than any other. The son, however, did not conform to these views. He showed little fondness for books, and, after loitering away two years at college, returned home, to the great chagrin of his parents. Yet his time had not been wholly misspent, since he had laid up a little store of Latin, and learned to write good prose, and even verses "of some estimation,

of the house of Cortés; which he traces up, nothing doubting, to Narnes Cortés, king of Lombardy and Tuscany. Anales de Aragon (Zaragoza, 1630), pp. 621–625.—Also, Caro de Torres, Historia de las Ordenes militares (Madrid, 1629), fol. 103.

[4] De Rebus gestis, MS.—Las Casas, who knew the father, bears stronger testimony to his poverty than to his noble birth. "Un escudero," he says of him, "que yo conocí harto pobre y humilde, aunque cristiano, viejo *y dizen que hidalgo.*" Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 27.

[5] [His parents had cast lots to decide which of the apostles should be chosen as his patron saint. The lot fell upon Peter, which explains the especial devotion which Cortés professed, through his whole life, to that saint, to whose watchful care he attributed the improvement in his health. Alaman, Disertaciones históricas, tom. ii. p. 4.]

considering"—as an old writer quaintly remarks—"Cortés as the author."[6] He now passed his days in the idle, unprofitable manner of one who, too wilful to be guided by others, proposes no object to himself. His buoyant spirits were continually breaking out in troublesome frolics and capricious humors, quite at variance with the orderly habits of his father's household. He showed a particular inclination for the military profession, or rather for the life of adventure to which in those days it was sure to lead. And when, at the age of seventeen, he proposed to enroll himself under the banners of the Great Captain, his parents, probably thinking a life of hardship and hazard abroad preferable to one of idleness at home, made no objection.

The youthful cavalier, however, hesitated whether to seek his fortunes under that victorious chief, or in the New World, where gold as well as glory was to be won, and where the very dangers had a mystery and romance in them inexpressibly fascinating to a youthful fancy. It was in this direction, accordingly, that the hot spirits of that day found a vent, especially from that part of the country where Cortés lived, the neighborhood of Seville and Cadiz, the focus of nautical enterprise. He decided on this latter course, and an opportunity offered in the splendid armament fitted out under Don Nicolas de Ovando, successor to Co-

[6] Argensola, Anales, p. 220.—Las Casas and Bernal Diaz both state that he was Bachelor of Laws at Salamanca. (Hist. de las Indias, MS., ubi supra.—Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 203.) The degree was given probably in later life, when the University might feel a pride in claiming him among her sons.

lumbus. An unlucky accident defeated the purpose of Cortés.[7]

As he was scaling a high wall, one night, which gave him access to the apartment of a lady with whom he was engaged in an intrigue, the stones gave way, and he was thrown down with much violence and buried under the ruins. A severe contusion, though attended with no other serious consequences, confined him to his bed till after the departure of the fleet.[8]

Two years longer he remained at home, profiting little, as it would seem, from the lesson he had received. At length he availed himself of another opportunity presented by the departure of a small squadron of vessels bound to the Indian islands. He was nineteen years of age when he bade adieu to his native shores in 1504,—the same year in which Spain lost the best and greatest in her long line of princes, Isabella the Catholic.

The vessel in which Cortés sailed was commanded by one Alonso Quintero. The fleet touched at the Canaries, as was common in the outward passage. While the other vessels were detained there taking in supplies, Quintero secretly stole out by night from the island, with the design of reaching Hispaniola and securing the market before the arrival of his companions. A furious storm which he encountered, however, dismasted his ship, and he was obliged to return to port and refit. The convoy consented to wait for

7 De Rebus gestis, MS.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 1.

8 De Rebus gestis, MS.—Gomara, Ibid.—Argensola states the cause of his detention concisely enough: "Suspendió el viaje, *por enamorado y por quartanario.*" Anales, p. 621.

their unworthy partner, and after a short detention they all sailed in company again. But the faithless Quintero, as they drew near the Islands, availed himself once more of the darkness of the night, to leave the squadron with the same purpose as before. Unluckily for him, he met with a succession of heavy gales and head-winds, which drove him from his course, and he wholly lost his reckoning. For many days the vessel was tossed about, and all on board were filled with apprehensions, and no little indignation against the author of their calamities. At length they were cheered one morning with the sight of a white dove, which, wearied by its flight, lighted on the topmast. The biographers of Cortés speak of it as a miracle.[9] Fortunately it was no miracle, but a very natural occurrence, showing incontestably that they were near land. In a short time, by taking the direction of the bird's flight, they reached the island of Hispaniola; and, on coming into port, the worthy master had the satisfaction to find his companions arrived before him, and their cargoes already sold.[10]

Immediately on landing, Cortés repaired to the house of the governor, to whom he had been personally known in Spain. Ovando was absent on an expedition into the interior, but the young man was kindly received by the secretary, who assured him there would be no

[9] Some thought it was the Holy Ghost in the form of this dove: "Sanctum esse Spiritum, qui, in illius alitis specie, ut mœstos et afflictos solaretur, venire erat dignatus" (De Rebus gestis, MS.); a conjecture which seems very reasonable to Pizarro y Orellana, since the expedition was to "redound so much to the spread of the Catholic faith, and the Castilian monarchy"! Varones ilustres, p. 70.

[10] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 2.

doubt of his obtaining a liberal grant of land to settle on. "But I came to get gold," replied Cortés, "not to till the soil, like a peasant."

On the governor's return, Cortés consented to give up his roving thoughts, at least for a time, as the other labored to convince him that he would be more likely to realize his wishes from the slow, indeed, but sure, returns of husbandry, where the soil and the laborers were a free gift to the planter, than by taking his chance in the lottery of adventure, in which there were so many blanks to a prize. He accordingly received a grant of land, with a *repartimiento* of Indians, and was appointed notary of the town or settlement of Açua. His graver pursuits, however, did not prevent his indulgence of the amorous propensities which belong to the sunny clime where he was born; and this frequently involved him in affairs of honor, from which, though an expert swordsman, he carried away scars that accompanied him to his grave.[11] He occasionally, moreover, found the means of breaking up the monotony of his way of life by engaging in the military expeditions which, under the command of Ovando's lieutenant, Diego Velasquez, were employed to suppress the insurrections of the natives. In this school the young adventurer first studied the wild tactics of Indian warfare; he became familiar with toil and danger, and with those deeds of cruelty which have too often, alas! stained the bright scutcheons of the Castilian chivalry in the New World. He was only prevented by illness—a most fortunate one, on this occasion—from embarking in Nicuessa's expedition,

[11] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 203.

which furnished a tale of woe not often matched in the annals of Spanish discovery. Providence reserved him for higher ends.

At length, in 1511, when Velasquez undertook the conquest of Cuba, Cortés willingly abandoned his quiet life for the stirring scenes there opened, and took part in the expedition. He displayed, throughout the invasion, an activity and courage that won him the approbation of the commander; while his free and cordial manners, his good humor and lively sallies of wit, made him the favorite of the soldiers. "He gave little evidence," says a contemporary, "of the great qualities which he afterwards showed." It is probable these qualities were not known to himself; while to a common observer his careless manners and jocund repartees might well seem incompatible with anything serious or profound; as the real depth of the current is not suspected under the light play and sunny sparkling of the surface.[12]

After the reduction of the island, Cortés seems to have been held in great favor by Velasquez, now appointed its governor. According to Las Casas, he was made one of his secretaries.[13] He still retained the same fondness for gallantry, for which his handsome person afforded obvious advantages, but which had more than once brought him into trouble in earlier life. Among the families who had taken up their residence

[12] De Rebus gestis, MS.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 3, 4.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 27.

[13] Hist. de las Indias, MS., loc. cit.—"Res omnes arduas difficilosque per Cortesium, quem in dies magis magisque amplectebatur, Velasquius agit. Ex eo ducis favore et gratia magna Cortesio invidia est orta." De Rebus gestis, MS.

in Cuba was one of the name of Xuarez, from Granada in Old Spain. It consisted of a brother, and four sisters remarkable for their beauty. With one of them, named Catalina, the susceptible heart of the young soldier became enamored.[14] How far the intimacy was carried is not quite certain. But it appears he gave his promise to marry her,—a promise which, when the time came, and reason, it may be, had got the better of passion, he showed no alacrity in keeping. He resisted, indeed, all remonstrances to this effect, from the lady's family, backed by the governor, and somewhat sharpened, no doubt, in the latter by the particular interest he took in one of the fair sisters, who is said not to have repaid it with ingratitude.

Whether the rebuke of Velasquez or some other cause of disgust rankled in the breast of Cortés, he now became cold towards his patron, and connected himself with a disaffected party tolerably numerous in the island. They were in the habit of meeting at his house and brooding over their causes of discontent, chiefly founded, it would appear, on what they conceived an ill requital of their services in the distribution of lands and offices. It may well be imagined that it could have been no easy task for the ruler of one of these colonies, however discreet and well intentioned, to satisfy the indefinite cravings of speculators and adventurers, who swarmed, like so many

[14] Solís has found a patent of nobility for this lady also,—"doncella noble y recatada." (Historia de la Conquista de Méjico (Paris, 1838), lib. 1, cap. 9.) Las Casas treats her with less ceremony: "Una hermana de *un* Juan Xuarez, *gente pobre*." Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 17.

famished harpies, in the track of discovery in the New World.[15]

The malecontents determined to lay their grievances before the higher authorities in Hispaniola, from whom Velasquez had received his commission. The voyage was one of some hazard, as it was to be made in an open boat, across an arm of the sea eighteen leagues wide; and they fixed on Cortés, with whose fearless spirit they were well acquainted, as the fittest man to undertake it. The conspiracy got wind, and came to the governor's ears before the departure of the envoy, whom he instantly caused to be seized, loaded with fetters, and placed in strict confinement. It is even said he would have hung him, but for the interposition of his friends.[16] The fact is not incredible. The governors of these little territories, having entire control over the fortunes of their subjects, enjoyed an authority far more despotic than that of the sovereign himself. They were generally men of rank and personal consideration; their distance from the mother-country withdrew their conduct from searching scrutiny, and, when that did occur, they usually had interest and means of corruption at command sufficient to shield them from punishment. The Spanish colonial history, in its earlier stages, affords striking instances of the extraordinary assumption and abuse of powers by these petty potentates; and the sad fate of Vasquez Nuñez de Balboa, the illustrious discoverer of the Pacific,

[15] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 4.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., ubi supra.—De Rebus gestis, MS.—Memorial de Benito Martinez, Capellan de D. Velasquez, contra H. Cortés, MS.

[16] Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., ubi supra.

though the most signal, is by no means a solitary example, that the greatest services could be requited by persecution and an ignominious death.

The governor of Cuba, however, although irascible and suspicious in his nature, does not seem to have been vindictive, nor particularly cruel. In the present instance, indeed, it may well be doubted whether the blame would not be more reasonably charged on the unfounded expectations of his followers than on himself.

Cortés did not long remain in durance. He contrived to throw back one of the bolts of his fetters, and, after extricating his limbs, succeeded in forcing open a window with the irons so as to admit of his escape. He was lodged on the second floor of the building, and was able to let himself down to the pavement without injury, and unobserved. He then made the best of his way to a neighboring church, where he claimed the privilege of sanctuary.

Velasquez, though incensed at his escape, was afraid to violate the sanctity of the place by employing force. But he stationed a guard in the neighborhood, with orders to seize the fugitive if he should forget himself so far as to leave the sanctuary. In a few days this happened. As Cortés was carelessly standing without the walls in front of the building, an *alguacil* suddenly sprang on him from behind and pinioned his arms, while others rushed in and secured him. This man, whose name was Juan Escudero, was afterwards hung by Cortés for some offence in New Spain.[17]

[17] Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., loc. cit.—Memorial de Martinez, MS.

The unlucky prisoner was again put in irons, and carried on board a vessel to sail the next morning for Hispaniola, there to undergo his trial. Fortune favored him once more. He succeeded, after much difficulty and no little pain, in passing his feet through the rings which shackled them. He then came cautiously on deck, and, covered by the darkness of the night, stole quietly down the side of the ship into a boat that lay floating below. He pushed off from the vessel with as little noise as possible. As he drew near the shore, the stream became rapid and turbulent. He hesitated to trust his boat to it, and, as he was an excellent swimmer, prepared to breast it himself, and boldly plunged into the water. The current was strong, but the arm of a man struggling for life was stronger; and, after buffeting the waves till he was nearly exhausted, he succeeded in gaining a landing; when he sought refuge in the same sanctuary which had protected him before. The facility with which Cortés a second time effected his escape may lead one to doubt the fidelity of his guards; who perhaps looked on him as the victim of persecution, and felt the influence of those popular manners which seem to have gained him friends in every society into which he was thrown.[18]

For some reason not explained,—perhaps from policy,—he now relinquished his objections to the marriage with Catalina Xuarez. He thus secured the good offices of her family. Soon afterwards the governor himself relented, and became reconciled to his un-

[18] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 4.—Herrera tells a silly story of his being unable to swim, and throwing himself on a plank, which, after being carried out to sea, was washed ashore with him at flood tide. Hist. general, dec. 1, lib. 9, cap. 8.

fortunate enemy. A strange story is told in connection with this event. It is said his proud spirit refused to accept the proffers of reconciliation made him by Velasquez; and that one evening, leaving the sanctuary, he presented himself unexpectedly before the latter in his own quarters, when on a military excursion at some distance from the capital. The governor, startled by the sudden apparition of his enemy completely armed before him, with some dismay inquired the meaning of it. Cortés answered by insisting on a full explanation of his previous conduct. After some hot discussion the interview terminated amicably; the parties embraced, and, when a messenger arrived to announce the escape of Cortés, he found him in the apartments of his Excellency, where, having retired to rest, both were actually sleeping in the same bed! The anecdote is repeated without distrust by more than one biographer of Cortés.[19] It is not very probable, however, that a haughty, irascible man like Velasquez should have given such uncommon proofs of condescension and familiarity to one, so far beneath him in station, with whom he had been so recently in deadly feud; nor, on the other hand, that Cortés should have had the silly temerity to brave the lion in his den, where a single nod would have sent him to the gibbet,—and that, too, with as little compunction or fear of consequences as would have attended the execution of an Indian slave.[20]

[19] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 4.—"Cœnat cubatque Cortesius cum Velasquio eodem in lecto. Qui postero die fugæ Cortesii nuntius venerat, Velasquium et Cortesium juxta accubantes intuitus, miratur." De Rebus gestis, MS.

[20] Las Casas, who remembered Cortés at this time "so poor and

The reconciliation with the governor, however brought about, was permanent. Cortés, though not re-established in the office of secretary, received a liberal *repartimiento* of Indians, and an ample territory in the neighborhood of St. Jago, of which he was soon after made *alcalde*. He now lived almost wholly on his estate, devoting himself to agriculture with more zeal than formerly. He stocked his plantation with different kinds of cattle, some of which were first introduced by him into Cuba.[21] He wrought, also, the gold-mines which fell to his share, and which in this island promised better returns than those in Hispaniola. By this course of industry he found himself, in a few years, master of some two or three thousand *castellanos*, a large sum for one in his situation. "God, who alone knows at what cost of Indian lives it was obtained," exclaims Las Casas, "will take account of it!"[22] His days glided smoothly away in these tranquil pursuits, and in the society of his beautiful wife, who, however ineligible as a connection, from the inferiority of her condition, appears to have fulfilled all the relations of a faithful and affectionate partner. Indeed, he was often heard to say at this time, as the good bishop above quoted

lowly that he would have gladly received any favor from the least of Velasquez' attendants," treats the story of the bravado with contempt. "Por lo qual si él [Velasquez] sintiera de Cortés una puncta de alfiler de cerviguillo ó presuncion, ó lo ahorcara ó á lo menos lo echara de la tierra y lo sumiera en ella sin que alzara cabeza en su vida." Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 27.

[21] "Pecuariam primus quoque habuit, in insulamque induxit, omni pecorum genere ex Hispania petito." De Rebus gestis, MS.

[22] "Los que por sacarle el oro muriéron Dios abrá tenido mejor cuenta que yo." Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 27. The text is a free translation.

remarks, "that he lived as happily with her as if she had been the daughter of a duchess." Fortune gave him the means in after-life of verifying the truth of his assertion.[23]

Such was the state of things, when Alvarado returned with the tidings of Grijalva's discoveries and the rich fruits of his traffic with the natives. The news spread like wildfire throughout the island; for all saw in it the promise of more important results than any hitherto obtained. The governor, as already noticed, resolved to follow up the track of discovery with a more considerable armament; and he looked around for a proper person to share the expense of it and to take the command.

Several hidalgos presented themselves, whom, from want of proper qualifications, or from his distrust of their assuming an independence of their employer, he, one after another, rejected. There were two persons in St. Jago in whom he placed great confidence,—Amador de Lares, the *contador*, or royal treasurer,[24] and his own secretary, Andres de Duero. Cortés was also in close intimacy with both these persons; and he availed himself of it to prevail on them to recommend him as a suitable person to be intrusted with the expedition. It is said he reinforced the proposal by

[23] "Estando conmigo, me lo dixo que estava tan contento con ella como si fuera hija de una Duquessa." Hist. de las Indias, MS., ubi supra.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 4.

[24] The treasurer used to boast he had passed some two-and-twenty years in the wars of Italy. He was a shrewd personage, and Las Casas, thinking that country a slippery school for morals, warned the governor, he says, more than once "to beware of the twenty-two years in Italy." Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 113.

promising a liberal share of the proceeds of it. However this may be, the parties urged his selection by the governor with all the eloquence of which they were capable. That officer had had ample experience of the capacity and courage of the candidate. He knew, too, that he had acquired a fortune which would enable him to co-operate materially in fitting out the armament. His popularity in the island would speedily attract followers to his standard.[25] All past animosities had long since been buried in oblivion, and the confidence he was now to repose in him would insure his fidelity and gratitude. He lent a willing ear, therefore, to the recommendation of his counsellors, and, sending for Cortés, announced his purpose of making him Captain-General of the Armada.[26]

Cortés had now attained the object of his wishes,—the object for which his soul had panted ever since he had set foot in the New World. He was no longer to be condemned to a life of mercenary drudgery, nor to be cooped up within the precincts of a petty island; but he was to be placed on a new and independent theatre of action, and a boundless prospective was opened to his view, which might satisfy not merely the wildest cravings of avarice, but, to a bold, aspiring spirit like his, the far more importunate cravings of ambition. He fully appreciated the importance of the late discoveries, and read in them the existence of the

[25] "Si él no fuera por Capitan, que no fuera la tercera parte de la gente que con él fué." Declaracion de Puertocarrero, MS. (Coruña, 30 de Abril, 1520).

[26] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 19.—De Rebus gestis, MS.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 7.—Las Casas, Hist. general de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 113.

great empire in the far West, dark hints of which had floated, from time to time, to the Islands, and of which more certain glimpses had been caught by those who had reached the continent. This was the country intimated to the "Great Admiral" in his visit to Honduras in 1502, and which he might have reached had he held on a northern course, instead of striking to the south in quest of an imaginary strait. As it was, "he had but opened the gate," to use his own bitter expression, "for others to enter." The time had at length come when they were to enter it; and the young adventurer, whose magic lance was to dissolve the spell which had so long hung over these mysterious regions, now stood ready to assume the enterprise.

From this hour the deportment of Cortés seemed to undergo a change. His thoughts, instead of evaporating in empty levities or idle flashes of merriment, were wholly concentrated on the great object to which he was devoted. His elastic spirits were shown in cheering and stimulating the companions of his toilsome duties, and he was roused to a generous enthusiasm, of which even those who knew him best had not conceived him capable. He applied at once all the money in his possession to fitting out the armament. He raised more by the mortgage of his estates, and by giving his obligations to some wealthy merchants of the place, who relied for their reimbursement on the success of the expedition; and, when his own credit was exhausted, he availed himself of that of his friends.

The funds thus acquired he expended in the purchase of vessels, provisions, and military stores, while

he invited recruits by offers of assistance to such as were too poor to provide for themselves, and by the additional promise of a liberal share of the anticipated profits.[27]

All was now bustle and excitement in the little town of St. Jago. Some were busy in refitting the vessels and getting them ready for the voyage; some in providing naval stores; others in converting their own estates into money in order to equip themselves; every one seemed anxious to contribute in some way or other to the success of the expedition. Six ships, some of them of a large size, had already been procured; and three hundred recruits enrolled themselves in the course of a few days, eager to seek their fortunes under the banner of this daring and popular chieftain.

How far the governor contributed towards the expenses of the outfit is not very clear. If the friends of Cortés are to be believed, nearly the whole burden fell on him; since, while he supplied the squadron without remuneration, the governor sold many of his own stores at an exorbitant profit.[28] Yet it does not seem

[27] Declaracion de Puertocarrero, MS.—Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Probanza en la Villa Segura, MS. (4 de Oct., 1520).

[28] The letter from the Municipality of Vera Cruz, after stating that Velasquez bore only one-third of the original expense, adds, "Y sepan Vras. Magestades que la mayor parte de la dicha tercia parte que el dicho Diego Velasquez gastó en hacer la dicha armada fué emplear sus dineros en vinos y en ropas, y en otras cosas de poco valor para nos lo vender acá en mucha mas cantidad de lo que á él le costó, por manera que podemos decir que entre nosotros los Españoles vasallos de Vras. Reales Altezas ha hecho Diego Velasquez su rescate y granosea de sus dineros cobrandolos muy bien." (Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.) Puertocarrero and Montejo, also, in their depositions

probable that Velasquez, with such ample means at his command, should have thrown on his deputy the burden of the expedition, nor that the latter—had he done so—could have been in a condition to meet these expenses, amounting, as we are told, to more than twenty thousand gold ducats. Still it cannot be denied that an ambitious man like Cortés, who was to reap all the glory of the enterprise, would very naturally be less solicitous to count the gains of it, than his employer, who, inactive at home, and having no laurels to win, must look on the pecuniary profits as his only recompense. The question gave rise, some years later, to a furious litigation between the parties, with which it is not necessary at present to embarrass the reader.

It is due to Velasquez to state that the instructions delivered by him for the conduct of the expedition cannot be charged with a narrow or mercenary spirit. The first object of the voyage was to find Grijalva, after which the two commanders were to proceed in company together. Reports had been brought back by Cordova, on his return from the first visit to Yucatan, that six Christians were said to be lingering in captivity in the interior of the country. It was supposed they might belong to the party of the unfortunate Nicuessa, and orders were given to find them out, if possible, and restore them to liberty. But the great object of the expedition was barter with the natives. In pursuing

taken in Spain, both speak of Cortés' having furnished two-thirds of the cost of the flotilla. (Declaracion de Puertocarrero, MS.—Declaracion de Montejo, MS. (29 de Abril, 1520.).) The letter from Vera Cruz, however, was prepared under the eye of Cortés; and the last two were his confidential officers.

this, special care was to be taken that they should receive no wrong, but be treated with kindness and humanity. Cortés was to bear in mind, above all things, that the object which the Spanish monarch had most at heart was the conversion of the Indians. He was to impress on them the grandeur and goodness of his royal master, to invite them "to give in their allegiance to him, and to manifest it by regaling him with such comfortable presents of gold, pearls, and precious stones as, by showing their own good will, would secure his favor and protection." He was to make an accurate survey of the coast, sounding its bays and inlets for the benefit of future navigators. He was to acquaint himself with the natural products of the country, with the character of its different races, their institutions and progress in civilization; and he was to send home minute accounts of all these, together with such articles as he should obtain in his intercourse with them. Finally, he was to take *the most careful care* to omit nothing that might redound to the service of God or his sovereign.[29]

Such was the general tenor of the instructions given to Cortés; and they must be admitted to provide for the interests of science and humanity, as well as for those which had reference only to a commercial speculation. It may seem strange, considering the discontent shown by Velasquez with his former captain, Grijalva, for not colonizing, that no directions should

[29] The instrument, in the original Castilian, will be found in Appendix, Part 2, No. 5. It is often referred to by writers who never saw it, as the Agreement between Cortés and Velasquez. It is, in fact, only the instructions given by this latter to his officer, who was no party to it.

have been given to that effect here. But he had not yet received from Spain the warrant for investing his agents with such powers; and that which had been obtained from the Hieronymite fathers in Hispaniola conceded only the right to traffic with the natives. The commission at the same time recognized the authority of Cortés as Captain-General of the expedition.[30]

[30] Declaracion de Puertocarrero, MS.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 7.—Velasquez soon after obtained from the crown authority to colonize the new countries, with the title of *adelantado* over them. The instrument was dated at Barcelona, Nov. 13th, 1518. (Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 3, cap. 8.) Empty privileges! Las Casas gives a caustic etymology of the title of *adelantado*, so often granted to the Spanish discoverers. "Adelantados porque se adelantaran en hazer males y daños tan gravísimos á gentes pacíficas." Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 117.

CHAPTER III.

JEALOUSY OF VELASQUEZ.—CORTÉS EMBARKS.—EQUIPMENT OF HIS FLEET.—HIS PERSON AND CHARACTER.—RENDEZVOUS AT HAVANA.—STRENGTH OF HIS ARMAMENT.

1519.

THE importance given to Cortés by his new position, and, perhaps, a somewhat more lofty bearing, gradually gave uneasiness to the naturally suspicious temper of Velasquez, who became apprehensive that his officer, when away where he would have the power, might also have the inclination, to throw off his dependence on him altogether. An accidental circumstance at this time heightened these suspicions. A mad fellow, his jester, one of those crack-brained wits—half wit, half fool—who formed in those days a common appendage to every great man's establishment, called out to the governor, as he was taking his usual walk one morning with Cortés towards the port, "Have a care, master Velasquez, or we shall have to go a hunting, some day or other, after this same captain of ours!" "Do you hear what the rogue says?" exclaimed the governor to his companion. "Do not heed him," said Cortés: "he is a saucy knave, and deserves a good whipping." The words sank deep, however, in the mind of Velasquez,—as, indeed, true jests are apt to stick.

There were not wanting persons about his Excel-

lency who fanned the latent embers of jealousy into a blaze. These worthy gentlemen, some of them kinsmen of Velasquez, who probably felt their own deserts somewhat thrown into the shade by the rising fortunes of Cortés, reminded the governor of his ancient quarrel with that officer, and of the little probability that affronts so keenly felt at the time could ever be forgotten. By these and similar suggestions, and by misconstructions of the present conduct of Cortés, they wrought on the passions of Velasquez to such a degree that he resolved to intrust the expedition to other hands.[1]

He communicated his design to his confidential advisers, Lares and Duero, and these trusty personages reported it without delay to Cortés, although, "to a man of half his penetration," says Las Casas, "the thing would have been readily divined from the governor's altered demeanor."[2] The two functionaries advised their friend to expedite matters as much as possible, and to lose no time in getting his fleet ready for sea, if he would retain the command of it. Cortés showed the same prompt decision on this occasion which more than once afterwards in a similar crisis gave the direction to his destiny.

[1] "Deterrebat," says the anonymous biographer, "eum Cortesii natura imperii avida, fiducia sui ingens, et nimius sumptus in classe parandâ. Timere itaque Velasquius cœpit, si Cortesius cum eâ classe iret, nihil ad se vel honoris vel lucri rediturum." De Rebus gestis, MS.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 19.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., cap. 114.

[2] "Cortés no avia menester mas para entendello de mirar el gesto á Diego Velasquez segun su astuta viveza y mundana sabiduría." Hist. de las Indias, MS., cap. 114.

He had not yet got his complement of men, nor of vessels, and was very inadequately provided with supplies of any kind. But he resolved to weigh anchor that very night. He waited on his officers, informed them of his purpose, and probably of the cause of it; and at midnight, when the town was hushed in sleep, they all went quietly on board, and the little squadron dropped down the bay. First, however, Cortés had visited the person whose business it was to supply the place with meat, and relieved him of all his stock on hand, notwithstanding his complaint that the city must suffer for it on the morrow, leaving him, at the same time, in payment, a massive gold chain of much value, which he wore round his neck.[3]

Great was the amazement of the good citizens of St. Jago when, at dawn, they saw that the fleet, which they knew was so ill prepared for the voyage, had left its moorings and was busily getting under way. The tidings soon came to the ears of his Excellency, who, springing from his bed, hastily dressed himself, mounted his horse, and, followed by his retinue, galloped down to the quay. Cortés, as soon as he descried their approach, entered an armed boat, and came within speaking-distance of the shore. "And is it thus you part from me?" exclaimed Velasquez; "a courteous way of taking leave, truly!" "Pardon me," answered Cortés; "time presses, and there are some things that should be done before they are even thought of. Has your Excellency any commands?" But the mortified

[3] Las Casas had the story from Cortés' own mouth. Hist. de las Indias, MS., cap. 114.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 7.—De Rebus gestis, MS.

governor had no commands to give; and Cortés, politely waving his hand, returned to his vessel, and the little fleet instantly made sail for the port of Macaca, about fifteen leagues distant. (November 18, 1518.) Velasquez rode back to his house to digest his chagrin as he best might; satisfied, probably, that he had made at least two blunders,—one in appointing Cortés to the command, the other in attempting to deprive him of it. For, if it be true that by giving our confidence by halves we can scarcely hope to make a friend, it is equally true that by withdrawing it when given we shall make an enemy.[4]

This clandestine departure of Cortés has been severely criticised by some writers, especially by Las Casas.[5] Yet much may be urged in vindication of his conduct. He had been appointed to the command by the voluntary act of the governor, and this had been fully ratified by the authorities of Hispaniola. He had at once devoted all his resources to the undertaking, incurring, indeed, a heavy debt in addition. He was now to be deprived of his commission, without any misconduct having been alleged or at least proved

[4] Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., cap. 114.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 3, cap. 12.—Solís, who follows Bernal Diaz in saying that Cortés parted openly and amicably from Velasquez, seems to consider it a great slander on the character of the former to suppose that he wanted to break with the governor so soon, when he had received so little provocation. (Conquista, lib. 1, cap. 10.) But it is not necessary to suppose that Cortés intended a rupture with his employer by this clandestine movement, but only to secure himself in the command. At all events, the text conforms in every particular to the statement of Las Casas, who, as he knew both the parties well, and resided on the island at the time, had ample means of information.

[5] Hist. de las Indias, MS., cap. 114.

against him. Such an event must overwhelm him in irretrievable ruin, to say nothing of the friends from whom he had so largely borrowed, and the followers who had embarked their fortunes in the expedition on the faith of his commanding it. There are few persons, probably, who, under these circumstances, would have felt called tamely to acquiesce in the sacrifice of their hopes to a groundless and arbitrary whim. The most to have been expected from Cortés was that he should feel obliged to provide faithfully for the interests of his employer in the conduct of the enterprise. How far he felt the force of this obligation will appear in the sequel.

From Macaca, where Cortés laid in such stores as he could obtain from the royal farms, and which, he said, he considered as "a loan from the king," he proceeded to Trinidad; a more considerable town, on the southern coast of Cuba. Here he landed, and, erecting his standard in front of his quarters, made proclamation, with liberal offers to all who would join the expedition. Volunteers came in daily, and among them more than a hundred of Grijalva's men, just returned from their voyage and willing to follow up the discovery under an enterprising leader. The fame of Cortés attracted, also, a number of cavaliers of family and distinction, some of whom, having accompanied Grijalva, brought much information valuable for the present expedition. Among these hidalgos may be mentioned Pedro de Alvarado and his brothers, Cristóval de Olid, Alonso de Avila, Juan Velasquez de Leon, a near relation of the governor, Alonso Hernandez de Puertocarrero, and Gonzalo de Sandoval,—all of them men who took a

most important part in the Conquest. Their presence was of great moment, as giving consideration to the enterprise; and, when they entered the little camp of the adventurers, the latter turned out to welcome them amidst lively strains of music and joyous salvos of artillery.

Cortés meanwhile was active in purchasing military stores and provisions. Learning that a trading-vessel laden with grain and other commodities for the mines was off the coast, he ordered out one of his caravels to seize her and bring her into port. He paid the master in bills for both cargo and ship, and even persuaded this man, named Sedeño, who was wealthy, to join his fortunes to the expedition. He also despatched one of his officers, Diego de Ordaz, in quest of another ship, of which he had tidings, with instructions to seize it in like manner, and to meet him with it off Cape St. Antonio, the westerly point of the island.[6] By this he effected another object, that of getting rid of Ordaz, who was one of the governor's household, and an inconvenient spy on his own actions.

While thus occupied, letters from Velasquez were received by the commander of Trinidad, requiring him to seize the person of Cortés and to detain him, as he had been deposed from the command of the fleet, which was given to another. This functionary communicated his instructions to the principal officers in

[6] Las Casas had this, also, from the lips of Cortés in later life. "Todo esto me dixo el mismo Cortés, con otras cosas cerca dello despues de Marques; . . . reindo y mofando é con estas formales palabras, *Á la mi fée andube por allí como un gentil cosario.*" Hist. de las Indias, MS., cap. 115.

the expedition, who counselled him not to make the attempt, as it would undoubtedly lead to a commotion among the soldiers, that might end in laying the town in ashes. Verdugo thought it prudent to conform to this advice.[7]

As Cortés was willing to strengthen himself by still further reinforcements, he ordered Alvarado with a small body of men to march across the country to the Havana, while he himself would sail round the westerly point of the island and meet him there with the squadron. In this port he again displayed his standard, making the usual proclamation. He caused all the large guns to be brought on shore, and, with the small arms and cross-bows, to be put in order. As there was abundance of cotton raised in this neighborhood, he had the jackets of the soldiers thickly quilted with it, for a defence against the Indian arrows, from which the troops in the former expeditions had grievously suffered. He distributed his men into eleven companies, each under the command of an experienced officer; and it was observed that, although several of the cavaliers in the service were the personal friends and even kinsmen of Velasquez, he appeared to treat them all with perfect confidence.

His principal standard was of black velvet, embroidered with gold, and emblazoned with a red cross amidst flames of blue and white, with this motto in Latin beneath: "Friends, let us follow the Cross; and under this sign, if we have faith, we shall conquer." He now assumed more state in his own person and way

7 De Rebus gestis, MS.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 8.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., cap. 114, 115.

of living, introducing a greater number of domestics and officers into his household, and placing it on a footing becoming a man of high station. This state he maintained through the rest of his life.[8]

Cortés at this time was thirty-three, or perhaps thirty-four, years of age. In stature he was rather above the middle size. His complexion was pale; and his large dark eye gave an expression of gravity to his countenance, not to have been expected in one of his cheerful temperament. His figure was slender, at least until later life; but his chest was deep, his shoulders broad, his frame muscular and well proportioned. It presented the union of agility and vigor which qualified him to excel in fencing, horsemanship, and the other generous exercises of chivalry. In his diet he was temperate, careless of what he ate, and drinking little; while to toil and privation he seemed perfectly indifferent. His dress, for he did not disdain the impression produced by such adventitious aids, was such as to set off his handsome person to advantage; neither gaudy nor striking, but rich. He wore few ornaments, and usually the same; but those were of great price. His manners, frank and soldier-like, concealed a most cool and calculating spirit. With his gayest humor there mingled a settled air of resolution, which made those who approached him feel they must obey, and which infused something like awe into the attachment of his most devoted followers. Such a combination, in which love was tempered by authority, was the one

[8] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 24.—De Rebus gestis, MS.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 8.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., cap. 115.—The legend on the standard was, doubtless, suggested by that on the *labarum*,—the sacred banner of Constantine.

probably best calculated to inspire devotion in the rough and turbulent spirits among whom his lot was to be cast.

The character of Cortés seems to have undergone some change with change of circumstances; or, to speak more correctly, the new scenes in which he was placed called forth qualities which before lay dormant in his bosom. There are some hardy natures that require the heats of excited action to unfold their energies; like the plants which, closed to the mild influence of a temperate latitude, come to their full growth, and give forth their fruits, only in the burning atmosphere of the tropics. Such is the portrait left to us by his contemporaries of this remarkable man; the instrument selected by Providence to scatter terror among the barbarian monarchs of the Western World, and lay their empires in the dust.[9]

Before the preparations were fully completed at the Havana, the commander of the place, Don Pedro Barba, received despatches from Velasquez ordering him to apprehend Cortés and to prevent the departure of his vessels; while another epistle from the same source was delivered to Cortés himself, requesting him to postpone his voyage till the governor could communicate with him, as he proposed, in person. "Never," exclaims Las Casas, "did I see so little knowledge of affairs shown, as in this letter of Diego Velasquez,—that he should have imagined that a man who had so

9 The most minute notices of the person and habits of Cortés are to be gathered from the narrative of the old cavalier Bernal Diaz, who served so long under him, and from Gomara, the general's chaplain. See in particular the last chapter of Gomara's Crónica, and cap. 203 of the Hist. de la Conquista.

recently put such an affront on him would defer his departure at his bidding!"[10] It was, indeed, hoping to stay the flight of the arrow by a word, after it had left the bow.

The Captain-General, however, during his short stay, had entirely conciliated the good will of Barba. And, if that officer had had the inclination, he knew he had not the power, to enforce his principal's orders, in the face of a resolute soldiery, incensed at this ungenerous persecution of their commander, and "all of whom," in the words of the honest chronicler who bore part in the expedition, "officers and privates, would have cheerfully laid down their lives for him."[11] Barba contented himself, therefore, with explaining to Velasquez the impracticability of the attempt, and at the same time endeavored to tranquillize his apprehensions by asserting his own confidence in the fidelity of Cortés. To this the latter added a communication of his own, couched "in the soft terms he knew so well how to use,"[12] in which he implored his Excellency to rely on his devotion to his interests, and concluded with the comfortable assurance that he and the whole fleet, God willing, would sail on the following morning.

Accordingly, on the 10th of February, 1519, the little squadron got under way, and directed its course towards Cape St. Antonio, the appointed place of rendezvous. When all were brought together, the vessels were found to be eleven in number; one of them, in which Cortés himself went, was of a hundred tons'

[10] Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., cap. 115.
[11] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 24.
[12] Ibid., loc. cit.

burden, three others were from seventy to eighty tons; the remainder were caravels and open brigantines. The whole was put under the direction of Antonio de Alaminos, as chief pilot; a veteran navigator, who had acted as pilot to Columbus in his last voyage, and to Cordova and Grijalva in the former expeditions to Yucatan.

Landing on the Cape and mustering his forces, Cortés found they amounted to one hundred and ten mariners, five hundred and fifty-three soldiers, including thirty-two crossbowmen, and thirteen arquebusiers, besides two hundred Indians of the island, and a few Indian women for menial offices. He was provided with ten heavy guns, four lighter pieces called falconets, and with a good supply of ammunition.[13] He had besides sixteen horses. They were not easily procured; for the difficulty of transporting them across the ocean in the flimsy craft of that day made them rare and incredibly dear in the Islands.[14] But Cortés

[13] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 26.—There is some discrepancy among authorities in regard to the numbers of the army. The Letter from Vera Cruz, which should have been exact, speaks in round terms of only four hundred soldiers. (Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.) Velasquez himself, in a communication to the Chief Judge of Hispaniola, states the number at six hundred. (Carta de Diego Velasquez al Lic. Figueroa, MS.) I have adopted the estimates of Bernal Diaz, who, in his long service, seems to have become intimately acquainted with every one of his comrades, their persons, and private history.

[14] Incredibly dear indeed, since, from the statements contained in the depositions at Villa Segura, it appears that the cost of the horses for the expedition was from four to five hundred *pesos de oro* each! "Si saben que de caballos que el dicho Señor Capitan General Hernando Cortés ha comprado para servir en la dicha Conquista, que son diez é ocho, que le han costado á quatrocientos cinquenta é á quinientos

rightfully estimated the importance of cavalry, however small in number, both for their actual service in the field, and for striking terror into the savages. With so paltry a force did he enter on a conquest which even his stout heart must have shrunk from attempting with such means, had he but foreseen half its real difficulties!

Before embarking, Cortés addressed his soldiers in a short but animated harangue. He told them they were about to enter on a noble enterprise, one that would make their name famous to after-ages. He was leading them to countries more vast and opulent than any yet visited by Europeans. "I hold out to you a glorious prize," continued the orator, "but it is to be won by incessant toil. Great things are achieved only by great exertions, and glory was never the reward of sloth.[15] If I have labored hard and staked my all on this undertaking, it is for the love of that renown which is the noblest recompense of man. But, if any among you covet riches more, be but true to me, as I will be true to you and to the occasion, and I will make you masters of such as our countrymen have never dreamed of! You are few in number, but strong in resolution; and,

pesos ha pagado, é que deve mas de ocho mil pesos de oro dellos." (Probanza en Villa Segura, MS.) The estimation of these horses is sufficiently shown by the minute information Bernal Diaz has thought proper to give of every one of them; minute enough for the pages of a sporting calendar. See Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 23.

[15] "Io vos propongo grandes premios, mas embueltos en grandes trabajos; pero la virtud no quiere ociosidad." (Gomara, Crónica, cap. 9.) It is the thought so finely expressed by Thomson:

> "For sluggard's brow the laurel never grows;
> Renown is not the child of indolent repose."

if this does not falter, doubt not but that the Almighty, who has never deserted the Spaniard in his contest with the infidel, will shield you, though encompassed by a cloud of enemies; for your cause is a *just cause*, and you are to fight under the banner of the Cross. Go forward, then," he concluded, "with alacrity and confidence, and carry to a glorious issue the work so auspiciously begun." [16]

The rough eloquence of the general, touching the various chords of ambition, avarice, and religious zeal, sent a thrill through the bosoms of his martial audience; and, receiving it with acclamations, they seemed eager to press forward under a chief who was to lead them not so much to battle, as to triumph.

Cortés was well satisfied to find his own enthusiasm so largely shared by his followers. Mass was then celebrated with the solemnities usual with the Spanish navigators when entering on their voyages of discovery. The fleet was placed under the immediate protection of St. Peter, the patron saint of Cortés, and, weighing anchor, took its departure on the eighteenth day of February, 1519, for the coast of Yucatan.[17]

[16] The text is a very condensed abridgment of the original speech of Cortés,—or of his chaplain, as the case may be. See it, in Gomara, Crónica, cap. 9.

[17] Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., cap. 115.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 10.—De Rebus gestis, MS.—"Tantus fuit armorum apparatus," exclaims the author of the last work, "quo alterum terrarum orbem bellis Cortesius concutit; ex tam parvis opibus tantum imperium Carolo facit; aperitque omnium primus Hispanæ genti Hispaniam novam!" The author of this work is unknown. It seems to have been part of a great compilation "De Orbe Novo," written, probably, on the plan of a series of biographical sketches, as the introduction speaks of a life of Columbus preceding this of Cortés. It was com-

posed, as it states, while many of the old Conquerors were still surviving, and is addressed to the son of Cortés. The historian, therefore, had ample means of verifying the truth of his own statements, although they too often betray, in his partiality for his hero, the influence of the patronage under which the work was produced. It runs into a prolixity of detail which, however tedious, has its uses in a contemporary document. Unluckily, only the first book was finished, or, at least, has survived; terminating with the events of this chapter. It is written in Latin, in a pure and perspicuous style, and is conjectured with some plausibility to be the work of Calvet de Estrella, Chronicler of the Indies. The original exists in the Archives of Simancas, where it was discovered and transcribed by Muñoz, from whose copy that in my library was taken.

CHAPTER IV.

VOYAGE TO COZUMEL.—CONVERSION OF THE NATIVES.—GERÓNIMO DE AGUILAR.—ARMY ARRIVES AT TABASCO.—GREAT BATTLE WITH THE INDIANS.—CHRISTIANITY INTRODUCED.

1519.

ORDERS were given for the vessels to keep as near together as possible, and to take the direction of the *capitania*, or admiral's ship, which carried a beacon-light in the stern during the night. But the weather, which had been favorable, changed soon after their departure, and one of those tempests set in which at this season are often found in the latitudes of the West Indies. It fell with terrible force on the little navy, scattering it far asunder, dismantling some of the ships, and driving them all considerably south of their proposed destination.

Cortés, who had lingered behind to convoy a disabled vessel, reached the island of Cozumel last. On landing, he learned that one of his captains, Pedro de Alvarado, had availed himself of the short time he had been there, to enter the temples, rifle them of their few ornaments, and, by his violent conduct, so far to terrify the simple natives that they had fled for refuge into the interior of the island. Cortés, highly incensed at these rash proceedings, so contrary to the policy he had proposed, could not refrain from severely reprimanding his officer in the presence of the army.

He commanded two Indian captives, taken by Alvarado, to be brought before him, and explained to them the pacific purpose of his visit. This he did through the assistance of his interpreter, Melchorejo, a native of Yucatan, who had been brought back by Grijalva, and who during his residence in Cuba had picked up some acquaintance with the Castilian. He then dismissed them loaded with presents, and with an invitation to their countrymen to return to their homes without fear of further annoyance. This humane policy succeeded. The fugitives, reassured, were not slow in coming back; and an amicable intercourse was established, in which Spanish cutlery and trinkets were exchanged for the gold ornaments of the natives; a traffic in which each party congratulated itself—a philosopher might think with equal reason—on outwitting the other.

The first object of Cortés was to gather tidings of the unfortunate Christians who were reported to be still lingering in captivity on the neighboring continent. From some traders in the island he obtained such a confirmation of the report that he sent Diego de Ordaz with two brigantines to the opposite coast of Yucatan, with instructions to remain there eight days. Some Indians went as messengers in the vessels, who consented to bear a letter to the captives informing them of the arrival of their countrymen in Cozumel with a liberal ransom for their release. Meanwhile the general proposed to make an excursion to the different parts of the island, that he might give employment to the restless spirits of the soldiers, and ascertain the resources of the country.

It was poor and thinly peopled. But everywhere he recognized the vestiges of a higher civilization than what he had before witnessed in the Indian islands. The houses were some of them large, and often built of stone and lime. He was particularly struck with the temples, in which were towers constructed of the same solid materials, and rising several stories in height. In the court of one of these he was amazed by the sight of a cross, of stone and lime, about ten palms high. It was the emblem of the god of rain. Its appearance suggested the wildest conjectures, not merely to the unlettered soldiers, but subsequently to the European scholar, who speculated on the character of the races that had introduced there the sacred symbol of Christianity. But no such inference, as we shall see hereafter, could be warranted.[1] Yet it must be regarded as a curious fact that the Cross should have been venerated as the object of religious worship both in the New World and in regions of the Old where the light of Christianity had never risen.[2]

[1] See Appendix, Part 1, Note 27.

[2] Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 25, et seq.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 10, 15.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 115.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 4, cap. 6.—Martyr, de Insulis nuper inventis (Coloniæ, 1574), p. 344. —While these pages were passing through the press, but not till two years after they were written, Mr. Stephens's important and interesting volumes appeared, containing the account of his second expedition to Yucatan. In the latter part of the work he describes his visit to Cozumel, now an uninhabited island covered with impenetrable forests. Near the shore he saw the remains of ancient Indian structures, which he conceives may possibly have been the same that met the eyes of Grijalva and Cortés, and which suggest to him some important inferences. He is led into further reflections on the existence

The next object of Cortés was to reclaim the natives from their gross idolatry and to substitute a purer form of worship. In accomplishing this he was prepared to use force, if milder measures should be ineffectual. There was nothing which the Spanish government had more earnestly at heart than the conversion of the Indians. It forms the constant burden of their instructions, and gave to the military expeditions in this western hemisphere somewhat of the air of a crusade. The cavalier who embarked in them entered fully into these chivalrous and devotional feelings. No doubt was entertained of the efficacy of conversion, however sudden might be the change or however violent the means. The sword was a good argument, when the tongue failed; and the spread of Mahometanism had shown that seeds sown by the hand of violence, far from perishing in the ground, would spring up and bear fruit to after-time. If this were so in a bad cause, how much more would it be true in a good one! The

of the cross as a symbol of worship among the islanders. (Incidents of Travel in Yucatan (New York, 1843), vol. ii. chap. 20.) As the discussion of these matters would lead me too far from the track of our narrative, I shall take occasion to return to them hereafter, when I treat of the architectural remains of the country.*

* [In the passages here referred to, the author has noticed various proofs of the existence of the cross as a symbol of worship among pagan nations both in the Old World and the New. The fact has been deemed a very puzzling one; yet the explanation, as traced by Dr. Brinton, is sufficiently simple: "The arms of the cross were designed to point to the cardinal points and represent the four winds, — the rain-bringers." Hence the name given to it in the Mexican language, signifying "Tree of our Life,"—a term well calculated to increase the wonderment of the Spanish discoverers. Myths of the New World, p. 96, et al.—ED.]

Spanish cavalier felt he had a high mission to accomplish as a soldier of the Cross. However unauthorized or unrighteous the war into which he had entered may seem to us, to him it was a holy war. He was in arms against the infidel. Not to care for the soul of his benighted enemy was to put his own in jeopardy. The conversion of a single soul might cover a multitude of sins. It was not for morals that he was concerned, but for *the faith*. This, though understood in its most literal and limited sense, comprehended the whole scheme of Christian morality. Whoever died in the faith, however immoral had been his life, might be said to die in the Lord. Such was the creed of the Castilian knight of that day, as imbibed from the preachings of the pulpit, from cloisters and colleges at home, from monks and missionaries abroad,—from all save one, whose devotion, kindled at a purer source, was not, alas! permitted to send forth its radiance far into the thick gloom by which he was encompassed.[3]

No one partook more fully of the feelings above described than Hernan Cortés. He was, in truth, the very mirror of the time in which he lived, reflecting its motley characteristics, its speculative devotion and practical license, but with an intensity all his own. He was greatly scandalized at the exhibition of the idolatrous practices of the people of Cozumel, though untainted, as it would seem, with human sacrifices. He endeavored to persuade them to embrace a better faith, through the agency of two ecclesiastics who

[3] See the biographical sketch of the good bishop Las Casas, the "Protector of the Indians," in the Postscript at the close of the present Book.

attended the expedition,—the licentiate Juan Diaz and Father Bartolomé de Olmedo. The latter of these godly men afforded the rare example—rare in any age —of the union of fervent zeal with charity, while he beautifully illustrated in his own conduct the precepts which he taught. He remained with the army through the whole expedition, and by his wise and benevolent counsels was often enabled to mitigate the cruelties of the Conquerors, and to turn aside the edge of the sword from the unfortunate natives.

These two missionaries vainly labored to persuade the people of Cozumel to renounce their abominations, and to allow the Indian idols, in which the Christians recognized the true lineaments of Satan,[4] to be thrown down and demolished. The simple natives, filled with horror at the proposed profanation, exclaimed that these were the gods who sent them the sunshine and the storm, and, should any violence be offered, they would be sure to avenge it by sending their lightnings on the heads of its perpetrators.

Cortés was probably not much of a polemic. At all events, he preferred on the present occasion action to argument, and thought that the best way to convince the Indians of their error was to prove the falsehood of the prediction. He accordingly, without further ceremony, caused the venerated images to be rolled down the stairs of the great temple, amidst the groans and lamentations of the natives. An altar was hastily

4 "It may have been that the devil appeared to them as he is, and left these forms stamped on their imagination, so that the imitative power of the artist reveals itself in the ugliness of the image." Solís, Conquista, p. 39.

constructed, an image of the Virgin and Child placed over it, and mass was performed by Father Olmedo and his reverend companion for the first time within the walls of a temple in New Spain. The patient ministers tried once more to pour the light of the gospel into the benighted understandings of the islanders, and to expound the mysteries of the Catholic faith. The Indian interpreter must have afforded rather a dubious channel for the transmission of such abstruse doctrines. But they at length found favor with their auditors, who, whether overawed by the bold bearing of the invaders, or convinced of the impotence of deities that could not shield their own shrines from violation, now consented to embrace Christianity.[5]

While Cortés was thus occupied with the triumphs of the Cross, he received intelligence that Ordaz had returned from Yucatan without tidings of the Spanish captives. Though much chagrined, the general did not choose to postpone longer his departure from Co-

5 Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 13.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 4, cap. 7.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 78.—Las Casas, whose enlightened views in religion would have done honor to the present age, insists on the futility of these forced conversions, by which it was proposed in a few days to wean men from the idolatry which they had been taught to reverence from the cradle. "The only way of doing this," he says, "is by long, assiduous, and faithful preaching, until the heathen shall gather some ideas of the true nature of the Deity and of the doctrines they are to embrace. Above all, the lives of the Christians should be such as to exemplify the truth of these doctrines, that, seeing this, the poor Indian may glorify the Father, and acknowledge him, who has such worshippers, for the true and only God." See the original remarks, which I quote *in extenso*, as a good specimen of the bishop's style when kindled by his subject into eloquence, in Appendix, Part 2, No. 6.

zumel. The fleet had been well stored with provisions by the friendly inhabitants, and, embarking his troops, Cortés, in the beginning of March, took leave of its hospitable shores. The squadron had not proceeded far, however, before a leak in one of the vessels compelled them to return to the same port. The detention was attended with important consequences; so much so, indeed, that a writer of the time discerns in it "a great mystery and a miracle."[6]

Soon after landing, a canoe with several Indians was seen making its way from the neighboring shores of Yucatan. On reaching the island, one of the men inquired, in broken Castilian, "if he were among Christians," and, being answered in the affirmative, threw himself on his knees and returned thanks to Heaven for his delivery. He was one of the unfortunate captives for whose fate so much interest had been felt. His name was Gerónimo de Aguilar, a native of Ecija, in Old Spain, where he had been regularly educated for the church. He had been established with the colony at Darien, and on a voyage from that place to Hispaniola, eight years previous, was wrecked near the coast of Yucatan. He escaped with several of his companions in the ship's boat, where some perished from hunger and exposure, while others were sacrificed, on their reaching land, by the cannibal natives of the peninsula. Aguilar was preserved from the same dismal fate by escaping into the interior, where he fell into the hands of a powerful cacique, who, though he spared his life, treated him at first with great rigor.

[6] "Muy gran misterio y milagro de Dios." Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.

The patience of the captive, however, and his singular humility, touched the better feelings of the chieftain, who would have persuaded Aguilar to take a wife among his people, but the ecclesiastic steadily refused, in obedience to his vows. This admirable constancy excited the distrust of the cacique, who put his virtue to a severe test by various temptations, and much of the same sort as those with which the Devil is said to have assailed St. Anthony.[7] From all these fiery trials, however, like his ghostly predecessor, he came out unscorched. Continence is too rare and difficult a virtue with barbarians, not to challenge their veneration, and the practice of it has made the reputation of more than one saint in the Old as well as the New World. Aguilar was now intrusted with the care of his master's household and his numerous wives. He was a man of discretion, as well as virtue; and his counsels were found so salutary that he was consulted on all important matters. In short, Aguilar became a great man among the Indians.

It was with much regret, therefore, that his master received the proposals for his return to his countrymen, to which nothing but the rich treasure of glass beads, hawk-bells, and other jewels of like value, sent for his ransom, would have induced him to consent. When Aguilar reached the coast, there had been so much delay that the brigantines had sailed; and it was

[7] They are enumerated by Herrera with a minuteness which may claim at least the merit of giving a much higher notion of Aguilar's virtue than the barren generalities of the text. (Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 4, cap. 6–8.) The story is prettily told by Washington Irving. Voyages and Discoveries of the Companions of Columbus (London, 1833), p. 263, et seq.

owing to the fortunate return of the fleet to Cozumel that he was enabled to join it.

On appearing before Cortés, the poor man saluted him in the Indian style, by touching the earth with his hand and carrying it to his head. The commander, raising him up, affectionately embraced him, covering him at the same time with his own cloak, as Aguilar was simply clad in the habiliments of the country, somewhat too scanty for a European eye. It was long, indeed, before the tastes which he had acquired in the freedom of the forest could be reconciled to the constraints either of dress or manners imposed by the artificial forms of civilization. Aguilar's long residence in the country had familiarized him with the Mayan dialects of Yucatan, and, as he gradually revived his Castilian, he became of essential importance as an interpreter. Cortés saw the advantage of this from the first, but he could not fully estimate all the consequences that were to flow from it.[8]

The repairs of the vessels being at length completed, the Spanish commander once more took leave of the friendly natives of Cozumel, and set sail on the 4th of March. Keeping as near as possible to the coast of Yucatan, he doubled Cape Catoche, and with flowing sheets swept down the broad bay of Campeachy, fringed with the rich dye-woods which have since furnished so important an article of commerce to Europe. He passed Potonchan, where Cordova had experienced a

[8] Camargo, Historia de Tlascala, MS.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 33, cap. 1.—Martyr, De Insulis, p. 347.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 29.—Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 115, 116.

rough reception from the natives; and soon after reached the mouth of the *Rio de Tabasco*, or *Grijalva*, in which that navigator had carried on so lucrative a traffic. Though mindful of the great object of his voyage,—the visit to the Aztec territories,—he was desirous of acquainting himself with the resources of this country, and determined to ascend the river and visit the great town on its borders.

The water was so shallow, from the accumulation of sand at the mouth of the stream, that the general was obliged to leave the ships at anchor and to embark in the boats with a part only of his forces. The banks were thickly studded with mangrove-trees, that, with their roots shooting up and interlacing one another, formed a kind of impervious screen or net-work, behind which the dark forms of the natives were seen glancing to and fro with the most menacing looks and gestures. Cortés, much surprised at these unfriendly demonstrations, so unlike what he had had reason to expect, moved cautiously up the stream. When he had reached an open place, where a large number of Indians were assembled, he asked, through his interpreter, leave to land, explaining at the same time his amicable intentions. But the Indians, brandishing their weapons, answered only with gestures of angry defiance. Though much chagrined, Cortés thought it best not to urge the matter further that evening, but withdrew to a neighboring island, where he disembarked his troops, resolved to effect a landing on the following morning.

When day broke, the Spaniards saw the opposite banks lined with a much more numerous array than on

the preceding evening, while the canoes along the shore were filled with bands of armed warriors. Cortés now made his preparations for the attack. He first landed a detachment of a hundred men under Alonso de Avila, at a point somewhat lower down the stream, sheltered by a thick grove of palms, from which a road, as he knew, led to the town of Tabasco, giving orders to his officer to march at once on the place, while he himself advanced to assault it in front.[9]

Then, embarking the remainder of his troops, Cortés crossed the river in face of the enemy; but, before commencing hostilities, that he might "act with entire regard to justice, and in obedience to the instructions of the Royal Council,"[10] he first caused proclamation to be made, through the interpreter, that he desired only a free passage for his men, and that he proposed to revive the friendly relations which had formerly subsisted between his countrymen and the natives. He assured them that if blood were spilt the sin would lie on their heads, and that resistance would be useless, since he was resolved at all hazards to take up his quarters that night in the town of Tabasco. This proclamation, delivered in lofty tone, and duly recorded by the notary, was answered by the Indians—who might possibly have comprehended one word in ten of it—with shouts of defiance and a shower of arrows.[11]

[9] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 31.—Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 18.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 118.—Martyr, De Insulis, p. 348.—There are some discrepancies between the statements of Bernal Diaz and the Letter from Vera Cruz; both by parties who were present.

[10] Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 31.

[11] "See," exclaims the Bishop of Chiapa, in his caustic vein, "the

Cortés, having now complied with all the requisitions of a loyal cavalier, and shifted the responsibility from his own shoulders to those of the Royal Council, brought his boats alongside of the Indian canoes. They grappled fiercely together, and both parties were soon in the water, which rose above the girdle. The struggle was not long, though desperate. The superior strength of the Europeans prevailed, and they forced the enemy back to land. Here, however, they were supported by their countrymen, who showered down darts, arrows, and blazing billets of wood on the heads of the invaders. The banks were soft and slippery, and it was with difficulty the soldiers made good their footing. Cortés lost a sandal in the mud, but continued to fight barefoot, with great exposure of his person, as the Indians, who soon singled out the leader, called to one another, "Strike at the chief!"

At length the Spaniards gained the bank, and were able to come into something like order, when they opened a brisk fire from their arquebuses and cross-

reasonableness of this 'requisition,' or, to speak more correctly, the folly and insensibility of the Royal Council, who could find, in the refusal of the Indians to receive it, a good pretext for war." (Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 118.) In another place he pronounces an animated invective against the iniquity of those who covered up hostilities under this empty form of words, the import of which was utterly incomprehensible to the barbarians. (Ibid., lib. 3, cap. 57.) The famous formula, used by the Spanish conquerors on this occasion, was drawn up by Dr. Palacios Reubios, a man of letters, and a member of the King's council. "But I laugh at him and his letters," exclaims Oviedo, "if he thought a word of it could be comprehended by the untutored Indians!" (Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 29, cap. 7.) The regular Manifesto, *requirimiento*, may be found translated in the concluding pages of Irving's "Voyages of the Companions of Columbus."

bows. The enemy, astounded by the roar and flash of the fire-arms, of which they had had no experience, fell back, and retreated behind a breast-work of timber thrown across the way. The Spaniards, hot in the pursuit, soon carried these rude defences, and drove the Tabascans before them towards the town, where they again took shelter behind their palisades.

Meanwhile Avila had arrived from the opposite quarter, and the natives, taken by surprise, made no further attempt at resistance, but abandoned the place to the Christians. They had previously removed their families and effects. Some provisions fell into the hands of the victors, but little gold, "a circumstance," says Las Casas, "which gave them no particular satisfaction."[12] It was a very populous place. The houses were mostly of mud; the better sort of stone and lime; affording proofs in the inhabitants of a superior refinement to that found in the Islands, as their stout resistance had given evidence of superior valor.[13]

[12] "Halláronlas llenas de maiz é gallinas y otros vastimentos, oro ninguno, de lo que ellos no resciviéron mucho plazer." Hist. de las Ind., MS., ubi supra.

[13] Peter Martyr gives a glowing picture of this Indian capital. "Ad fluminis ripam protentum dicunt esse oppidum, quantum non ausim dicere: mille quingentorum passuum, ait Alaminus nauclerus, et domorum quinque ac viginti millium: stringunt alij, ingens tamen fatentur et celebre. Hortis intersecantur domus, quæ sunt *egregiè lapidibus et calce fabrefactæ, maximâ industriâ et architectorum arte.*" (De Insulis, p. 349.) With his usual inquisitive spirit, he gleaned all the particulars from the old pilot Alaminos, and from two of the officers of Cortés who revisited Spain in the course of that year. Tabasco was in the neighborhood of those ruined cities of Yucatan which have lately been the theme of so much speculation. The encomiums of Martyr are not so remarkable as the apathy of other contemporary chroniclers.

Cortés, having thus made himself master of the town, took formal possession of it for the crown of Castile. He gave three cuts with his sword on a large *ceiba*-tree which grew in the place, and proclaimed aloud that he took possession of the city in the name and behalf of the Catholic sovereigns, and would maintain and defend the same with sword and buckler against all who should gainsay it. The same vaunting declaration was also made by the soldiers, and the whole was duly recorded and attested by the notary. This was the usual simple but chivalric form with which the Spanish cavaliers asserted the royal title to the conquered territories in the New World. It was a good title, doubtless, against the claims of any other European potentate.

The general took up his quarters that night in the court-yard of the principal temple. He posted his sentinels, and took all the precautions practised in wars with a civilized foe. Indeed, there was reason for them. A suspicious silence seemed to reign through the place and its neighborhood; and tidings were brought that the interpreter, Melchorejo, had fled, leaving his Spanish dress hanging on a tree. Cortés was disquieted by the desertion of this man, who would not only inform his countrymen of the small number of the Spaniards, but dissipate any illusions that might be entertained of their superior natures.

On the following morning, as no traces of the enemy were visible, Cortés ordered out a detachment under Alvarado, and another under Francisco de Lujo, to reconnoitre. The latter officer had not advanced a league, before he learned the position of the Indians, by their attacking him in such force that he was fain

to take shelter in a large stone building, where he was closely besieged. Fortunately, the loud yells of the assailants, like most barbarous nations seeking to strike terror by their ferocious cries, reached the ears of Alvarado and his men, who, speedily advancing to the relief of their comrades, enabled them to force a passage through the enemy. Both parties retreated, closely pursued, on the town, when Cortés, marching out to their support, compelled the Tabascans to retire.

A few prisoners were taken in this skirmish. By them Cortés found his worst apprehensions verified. The country was everywhere in arms. A force consisting of many thousands had assembled from the neighboring provinces, and a general assault was resolved on for the next day. To the general's inquiries why he had been received in so different a manner from his predecessor, Grijalva, they answered that "the conduct of the Tabascans then had given great offence to the other Indian tribes, who taxed them with treachery and cowardice; so that they had promised, on any return of the white men, to resist them in the same manner as their neighbors had done."[14]

Cortés might now well regret that he had allowed himself to deviate from the direct object of his enterprise, and to become entangled in a doubtful war which could lead to no profitable result. But it was too late to repent. He had taken the step, and had no alternative but to go forward. To retreat would

[14] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 31, 32.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 18.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 118, 119.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 78, 79.

dishearten his own men at the outset, impair their confidence in him as their leader, and confirm the arrogance of his foes, the tidings of whose success might precede him on his voyage and prepare the way for greater mortifications and defeats. He did not hesitate as to the course he was to pursue, but, calling his officers together, announced his intention to give battle the following morning.[15]

He sent back to the vessels such as were disabled by their wounds, and ordered the remainder of the forces to join the camp. Six of the heavy guns were also taken from the ships, together with all the horses. The animals were stiff and torpid from long confinement on board; but a few hours' exercise restored them to their strength and usual spirit. He gave the command of the artillery—if it may be dignified with the name—to a soldier named Mesa, who had acquired some experience as an engineer in the Italian wars. The infantry he put under the orders of Diego de Ordaz, and took charge of the cavalry himself. It consisted of some of the most valiant gentlemen of his little band, among whom may be mentioned Alvarado, Velasquez de Leon, Avila, Puertocarrero, Olid, Montejo. Having thus made all the necessary arrangements, and settled his plan of battle, he retired to rest,—but not to slumber. His feverish mind, as may well be imagined, was filled with anxiety for the morrow, which might decide the fate of his expedition; and, as was his

[15] According to Solís, who quotes the address of Cortés on the occasion, he summoned a council of his captains to advise him as to the course he should pursue. (Conquista, cap. 19.) It is possible; but I find no warrant for it anywhere.

wont on such occasions, he was frequently observed, during the night, going the rounds, and visiting the sentinels, to see that no one slept upon his post.

At the first glimmering of light he mustered his army, and declared his purpose not to abide, cooped up in the town, the assault of the enemy, but to march at once against him. For he well knew that the spirits rise with action, and that the attacking party gathers a confidence from the very movement, which is not felt by the one who is passively, perhaps anxiously, awaiting the assault. The Indians were understood to be encamped on a level ground a few miles distant from the city, called the plain of Ceutla. The general commanded that Ordaz should march with the foot, including the artillery, directly across the country, and attack them in front, while he himself would fetch a circuit with the horse, and turn their flank when thus engaged, or fall upon their rear.

These dispositions being completed, the little army heard mass and then sallied forth from the wooden walls of Tabasco. It was Lady-day, the twenty-fifth of March,—long memorable in the annals of New Spain. The district around the town was checkered with patches of maize, and, on the lower level, with plantations of cacao,—supplying the beverage, and perhaps the coin, of the country, as in Mexico. These plantations, requiring constant irrigation, were fed by numerous canals and reservoirs of water, so that the country could not be traversed without great toil and difficulty. It was, however, intersected by a narrow path or causeway over which the cannon could be dragged.

The troops advanced more than a league on their

laborious march, without descrying the enemy. The weather was sultry, but few of them were embarrassed by the heavy mail worn by the European cavaliers at that period. Their cotton jackets, thickly quilted, afforded a tolerable protection against the arrows of the Indians, and allowed room for the freedom and activity of movement essential to a life of rambling adventure in the wilderness.

At length they came in sight of the broad plains of Ceutla, and beheld the dusky lines of the enemy stretching, as far as the eye could reach, along the edge of the horizon. The Indians had shown some sagacity in the choice of their position; and, as the weary Spaniards came slowly on, floundering through the morass, the Tabascans set up their hideous battle-cries, and discharged volleys of arrows, stones, and other missiles, which rattled like hail on the shields and helmets of the assailants. Many were severely wounded before they could gain the firm ground, where they soon cleared a space for themselves, and opened a heavy fire of artillery and musketry on the dense columns of the enemy, which presented a fatal mark for the balls. Numbers were swept down at every discharge; but the bold barbarians, far from being dismayed, threw up dust and leaves to hide their losses, and, sounding their war-instruments, shot off fresh flights of arrows in return.

They even pressed closer on the Spaniards, and, when driven off by a vigorous charge, soon turned again, and, rolling back like the waves of the ocean, seemed ready to overwhelm the little band by weight of numbers. Thus cramped, the latter had scarcely room to

perform their necessary evolutions, or even to work their guns with effect.[16]

The engagement had now lasted more than an hour, and the Spaniards, sorely pressed, looked with great anxiety for the arrival of the horse—which some unaccountable impediments must have detained—to relieve them from their perilous position. At this crisis, the farthest columns of the Indian army were seen to be agitated and thrown into a disorder that rapidly spread through the whole mass. It was not long before the ears of the Christians were saluted with the cheering war-cry of "San Jago and San Pedro!" and they beheld the bright helmets and swords of the Castilian chivalry flashing back the rays of the morning sun, as they dashed through the ranks of the enemy, striking to the right and left, and scattering dismay around them. The eye of faith, indeed, could discern the patron Saint of Spain, himself, mounted on his gray war-horse, heading the rescue and trampling over the bodies of the fallen infidels![17]

[16] Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 119.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 19, 20.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 4, cap. 11.—Martyr, De Insulis, p. 350.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 79.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 33, 36.—Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.

[17] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 79.—"Cortés supposed it was his own tutelar saint, St. Peter," says Pizarro y Orellana; "but the common and indubitable opinion is that it was our glorious apostle St. James, the bulwark and safeguard of our nation." (Varones ilustres, p. 73.) "Sinner that I am," exclaims honest Bernal Diaz, in a more skeptical vein, "it was not permitted to me to see either the one or the other of the Apostles on this occasion." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 34.*

* [The remark of Bernal Diaz is not to be taken as ironical. His faith in the same vision on subsequent occasions is expressed without

The approach of Cortés had been greatly retarded by the broken nature of the ground. When he came up, the Indians were so hotly engaged that he was upon them before they observed his approach. He ordered his men to direct their lances at the faces of their opponents,[18] who, terrified at the monstrous apparition, —for they supposed the rider and the horse, which they had never before seen, to be one and the same,[19] —were seized with a panic. Ordaz availed himself of it to command a general charge along the line, and the Indians, many of them throwing away their arms, fled without attempting further resistance.

[18] It was the order—as the reader may remember—given by Cæsar to his followers in his battle with Pompey:

> 'Adversosque jubet ferro confundere vultus."
> LUCAN, Pharsalia, lib. 7, v. 575.

[19] "Equites," says Paolo Giovio, "unum integrum Centaurorum specie animal esse existimarent." Elogia Virorum Illustrium (Basil, 1696), lib. 6, p. 229.

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demur. In the present case he recognized the rider of the gray horse as a Spanish cavalier, Francisco de Morla. It appears from the account of Andrés de Tápia, another companion of Cortés, whose narrative has been recently published, that, owing to canals and other impediments, the cavalry was unable to effect the intended détour, and it therefore returned and joined the infantry. The latter, meanwhile, having seen a cavalier on a gray horse charging the Indians in their rear, supposed that the cavalry had penetrated to that quarter. Cortés, on hearing this, exclaimed, "Adelante, compañeros, que Dios es con nosotros." (Icazbalceta, Col. de Doc. para la Hist. de México, tom. i.) Tápia says nothing about St. James or St. Peter, and perhaps suspected that the incident was a ruse contrived by Cortés. Generally, however, such legends seem to be sufficiently explained by the religious belief and excited imagination of the narrators. See the remarks, on this point, of Macaulay, who notices the account of Diaz, in the introduction to his lay of the Battle of the Lake Regillus.—ED.]

Cortés was too content with the victory to care to follow it up by dipping his sword in the blood of the fugitives. He drew off his men to a copse of palms which skirted the place, and under their broad canopy the soldiers offered up thanksgivings to the Almighty for the victory vouchsafed them. The field of battle was made the site of a town, called, in honor of the day on which the action took place, *Santa María de la Victoria*, long afterwards the capital of the province.[20] The number of those who fought or fell in the engagement is altogether doubtful. Nothing, indeed, is more uncertain than numerical estimates of barbarians. And they gain nothing in probability when they come, as in the present instance, from the reports of their enemies. Most accounts, however, agree that the Indian force consisted of five squadrons of eight thousand men each. There is more discrepancy as to the number of slain, varying from one to thirty thousand! In this monstrous discordance, the common disposition to exaggerate may lead us to look for truth in the neighborhood of the smallest number. The loss of the Christians was inconsiderable; not exceeding—if we receive their own reports, probably, from the same causes, much diminishing the truth—two killed and less than a hundred wounded! We may readily comprehend the feelings of the Conquerors, when they declared that "Heaven must have fought on their side, since their own strength could never have prevailed against such a multitude of enemies!"[21]

[20] Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. iii. p. 11.

[21] "Crean Vras. Reales Altezas por cierto, que esta batalla fué vencida mas por voluntad de Dios que por nras. fuerzas, porque para

Several prisoners were taken in the battle, among them two chiefs. Cortés gave them their liberty, and sent a message by them to their countrymen "that he would overlook the past, if they would come in at once and tender their submission. Otherwise he would ride over the land, and put every living thing in it, man, woman, and child, to the sword!" With this formidable menace ringing in their ears, the envoys departed.

But the Tabascans had no relish for further hostilities. A body of inferior chiefs appeared the next day, clad in dark dresses of cotton, intimating their abject condition, and implored leave to bury their dead. It was granted by the general, with many assurances of his friendly disposition; but at the same time he told them he expected their principal caciques, as he would treat with none other. These soon presented themselves, attended by a numerous train of vassals, who followed with timid curiosity to the Christian camp. Among their propitiatory gifts were twenty female slaves, which, from the character of one of them, proved of infinitely more consequence than was anticipated by either Spaniards or Tabascans. Confidence was soon restored, and was succeeded by a friendly intercourse, and the interchange of Spanish toys for the rude commodities of the country, articles

con quarenta mil hombres de guerra, poca defensa fuera quatrozientos que nosotros eramos." (Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 20.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 35.) It is Las Casas, who, regulating his mathematics, as usual, by his feelings, rates the Indian loss at the exorbitant amount cited in the text. "This," he concludes, dryly, "was the first preaching of the gospel by Cortés in New Spain!" Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 119.

of food, cotton, and a few gold ornaments of little value. When asked where the precious metal was procured, they pointed to the west, and answered, "Culhua," "Mexico." The Spaniards saw this was no place for them to traffic, or to tarry in. Yet here, they were not many leagues distant from a potent and opulent city, or what once had been so, the ancient Palenque. But its glory may have even then passed away, and its name have been forgotten by the surrounding nations.

Before his departure the Spanish commander did not omit to provide for one great object of his expedition, the conversion of the Indians. He first represented to the caciques that he had been sent thither by a powerful monarch on the other side of the water, for whom he had now a right to claim their allegiance. He then caused the reverend fathers Olmedo and Diaz to enlighten their minds, as far as possible, in regard to the great truths of revelation, urging them to receive these in place of their own heathenish abominations. The Tabascans, whose perceptions were no doubt materially quickened by the discipline they had undergone, made but a faint resistance to either proposal. The next day was Palm Sunday, and the general resolved to celebrate their conversion by one of those pompous ceremonials of the Church, which should make a lasting impression on their minds.

A solemn procession was formed of the whole army, with the ecclesiastics at their head, each soldier bearing a palm-branch in his hand. The concourse was swelled by thousands of Indians of both sexes, who followed in curious astonishment at the spectacle. The long

files bent their way through the flowery savannas that bordered the settlement, to the principal temple, where an altar was raised, and the image of the presiding deity was deposed to make room for that of the Virgin with the infant Saviour. Mass was celebrated by Father Olmedo, and the soldiers who were capable joined in the solemn chant. The natives listened in profound silence, and, if we may believe the chronicler of the event who witnessed it, were melted into tears; while their hearts were penetrated with reverential awe for the God of those terrible beings who seemed to wield in their own hands the thunder and the lightning.[22]

The Roman Catholic communion has, it must be admitted, some decided advantages over the Protestant, for the purposes of proselytism. The dazzling pomp of its service and its touching appeal to the sensibilities affect the imagination of the rude child of nature much more powerfully than the cold abstractions of Protestantism, which, addressed to the reason, demand a degree of refinement and mental culture in the audience to comprehend them. The respect, moreover, shown by the Catholic for the material representations of Divinity, greatly facilitates the same object. It is true, such representations are used by him only as incentives, not as the objects of worship. But this distinction is lost on the savage, who finds such forms of adoration too analogous to his own to impose any great violence on his feelings. It is only required of

[22] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 21, 22.—Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Martyr, De Insulis, p. 351.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., ubi supra.

him to transfer his homage from the image of Quetzalcoatl, the benevolent deity who walked among men, to that of the Virgin or the Redeemer; from the Cross, which he has worshipped as the emblem of the god of rain, to the same Cross, the symbol of salvation.

These solemnities concluded, Cortés prepared to return to his ships, well satisfied with the impression made on the new converts, and with the conquests he had thus achieved for Castile and Christianity. The soldiers, taking leave of their Indian friends, entered the boats with the palm-branches in their hands, and, descending the river, re-embarked on board their vessels, which rode at anchor at its mouth. A favorable breeze was blowing, and the little navy, opening its sails to receive it, was soon on its way again to the golden shores of Mexico.

CHAPTER V.

VOYAGE ALONG THE COAST.—DOÑA MARINA.—SPANIARDS LAND IN MEXICO.—INTERVIEW WITH THE AZTECS.

1519.

THE fleet held its course so near the shore that the inhabitants could be seen on it; and, as it swept along the winding borders of the Gulf, the soldiers, who had been on the former expedition with Grijalva, pointed out to their companions the memorable places on the coast. Here was the *Rio de Alvarado*, named after the gallant adventurer, who was present also in this expedition; there the *Rio de Vanderas*, in which Grijalva had carried on so lucrative a commerce with the Mexicans; and there the *Isla de los Sacrificios*, where the Spaniards first saw the vestiges of human sacrifice on the coast. Puertocarrero, as he listened to these reminiscences of the sailors, repeated the words of the old ballad of Montesinos, "Here is France, there is Paris, and there the waters of the Duero,"[1] etc. "But

[1] "Cata Francia, Montesinos,
Cata Paris la ciudad,
Cata las aguas de Duero
Do van á dar en la mar."

They are the words of the popular old ballad, first published, I believe, in the Romancero de Ambéres, and lately by Duran, Romances caballerescos é históricos, Parte 1, p. 82.

I advise you," he added, turning to Çortés, "to look out only for the rich lands, and the best way to govern them." "Fear not," replied his commander: "if Fortune but favors me as she did Orlando, and I have such gallant gentlemen as you for my companions, I shall understand myself very well."[2]

The fleet had now arrived off San Juan de Ulua, the island so named by Grijalva. The weather was temperate and serene, and crowds of natives were gathered on the shore of the main land, gazing at the strange phenomenon, as the vessels glided along under easy sail on the smooth bosom of the waters. It was the evening of Thursday in Passion Week. The air came pleasantly off the shore, and Cortés, liking the spot, thought he might safely anchor under the lee of the island, which would shelter him from the *nortes* that sweep over these seas with fatal violence in the winter, sometimes even late in the spring.

The ships had not been long at anchor, when a light pirogue, filled with natives, shot off from the neighboring continent, and steered for the general's vessel, distinguished by the royal ensign of Castile floating from the mast. The Indians came on board with a frank confidence, inspired by the accounts of the Spaniards spread by their countrymen who had traded with Grijalva. They brought presents of fruits and flowers and little ornaments of gold, which they gladly exchanged for the usual trinkets. Cortés was baffled in his attempts to hold a conversation with his visitors by means of the interpreter, Aguilar, who was ignorant of the language; the Mayan dialects, with which he was

[2] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 37.

conversant, bearing too little resemblance to the Aztec. The natives supplied the deficiency, as far as possible, by the uncommon vivacity and significance of their gestures,—the hieroglyphics of speech; but the Spanish commander saw with chagrin the embarrassments he must encounter in future for want of a more perfect medium of communication.[3] In this dilemma, he was informed that one of the female slaves given to him by the Tabascan chiefs was a native Mexican, and understood the language. Her name—that given to her by the Spaniards—was Marina; and, as she was to exercise a most important influence on their fortunes, it is necessary to acquaint the reader with something of her character and history.

She was born at Painalla, in the province of Coatzacualco, on the southeastern borders of the Mexican empire. Her father, a rich and powerful cacique, died when she was very young. Her mother married again, and, having a son, she conceived the infamous idea of securing to this offspring of her second union Marina's rightful inheritance. She accordingly feigned that the latter was dead, but secretly delivered her into the hands of some itinerant traders of Xicallanco. She availed herself, at the same time, of the death of a child of one of her slaves, to substitute the corpse for that of her own daughter, and celebrated the obsequies with mock solemnity. These particulars are related by

3 Las Casas notices the significance of the Indian gestures as implying a most active imagination: "Señas é meneos con que los Yndios mucho mas que otras generaciones entienden y se dan á entender, por tener muy bivos los sentidos exteriores y tambien los interiores, mayormente que es admirable su imaginacion." Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 120.

the honest old soldier Bernal Diaz, who knew the mother, and witnessed the generous treatment of her afterwards by Marina. By the merchants the Indian maiden was again sold to the cacique of Tabasco, who delivered her, as we have seen, to the Spaniards.

From the place of her birth, she was well acquainted with the Mexican tongue, which, indeed, she is said to have spoken with great elegance. Her residence in Tabasco familiarized her with the dialects of that country, so that she could carry on a conversation with Aguilar, which he in turn rendered into the Castilian. Thus a certain though somewhat circuitous channel was opened to Cortés for communicating with the Aztecs; a circumstance of the last importance to the success of his enterprise. It was not very long, however, before Marina, who had a lively genius, made herself so far mistress of the Castilian as to supersede the necessity of any other linguist. She learned it the more readily, as it was to her the language of love.

Cortés, who appreciated the value of her services from the first, made her his interpreter, then his secretary, and, won by her charms, his mistress. She had a son by him, Don Martin Cortés, *comendador* of the Military Order of St. James, less distinguished by his birth than his unmerited persecutions.

Marina was at this time in the morning of life. She is said to have possessed uncommon personal attractions,[4] and her open, expressive features indicated her

[4] "Hermosa como Diosa," *beautiful as a goddess*, says Camargo of her. (Hist. de Tlascala, MS.) A modern poet pays her charms the following not inelegant tribute:

"Admira tan lúcida cabalgada
Y espectáculo tal Doña Marina,

generous temper. She always remained faithful to the countrymen of her adoption; and her knowledge of the language and customs of the Mexicans, and often of their designs, enabled her to extricate the Spaniards, more than once, from the most embarrassing and perilous situations. She had her errors, as we have seen. But they should be rather charged to the defects of early education, and to the evil influence of him to whom in the darkness of her spirit she looked with simple confidence for the light to guide her. All agree that she was full of excellent qualities, and the important services which she rendered the Spaniards have made her memory deservedly dear to them; while the name of Malinche[5]—the name by which she is still known in Mexico—was pronounced with kindness by the conquered races, with whose misfortunes she showed an invariable sympathy.[6]

India noble al caudillo presentada,
De fortuna y belleza peregrina.
* * * * * *
Con despejado espíritu y viveza
Gira la vista en el concurso mudo;
Rico manto de extrema sutileza
Con chapas de oro autorizarla pudo,
Prendido con bizarra gentileza
Sobre los pechos en ayroso nudo;
Reyna parece de la Indiana Zona,
Varonil y hermosísima Amazona."

MORATIN, Las Naves de Cortés destruidas.

5 [" Malinche" is a corruption of the Aztec word " Malintzin," which is itself a corruption of the Spanish name " Marina." The Aztecs, having no *r* in their alphabet, substituted *l* for it, while the termination *tzin* was added in token of respect, so that the name was equivalent to Doña or Lady Marina. Conquista de Méjico (trad. de Vega, anotada por D. Lúcas Alaman), tom. ii. pp. 17, 269.]

6 Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 120.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 25, 26.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. iii. pp. 12-

With the aid of his two intelligent interpreters, Cortés entered into conversation with his Indian visitors. He learned that they were Mexicans, or rather subjects of the great Mexican empire, of which their own province formed one of the comparatively recent conquests. The country was ruled by a powerful monarch, called Moctheuzoma, or by Europeans more commonly Montezuma,[7] who dwelt on the mountain plains of the interior, nearly seventy leagues from the coast; their own province was governed by one of his nobles, named Teuhtlile, whose residence was eight leagues distant. Cortés acquainted them in turn with his own friendly views in visiting their country, and with his desire of an interview with the Aztec governor. He then dismissed them loaded with presents, having first ascertained that there was abundance of gold in the interior, like the specimens they had brought.

Cortés, pleased with the manners of the people and the goodly reports of the land, resolved to take up his quarters here for the present. The next morning, April 21, being Good Friday, he landed, with all his force, on

14.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 33, cap. 1.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 79.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 37, 38.—There is some discordance in the notices of the early life of Marina. I have followed Bernal Diaz,—from his means of observation, the best authority. There is happily no difference in the estimate of her singular merits and services.

7 The name of the Aztec monarch, like those of most persons and places in New Spain, has been twisted into all possible varieties of orthography. Cortés, in his letters, calls him "Muteczuma." Modern Spanish historians usually spell his name "Motezuma." I have preferred to conform to the name by which he is usually known to English readers. It is the one adopted by Bernal Diaz, and by most writers near the time of the Conquest. Alaman, Disertaciones históricas, tom. i., apénd. 2.

the very spot where now stands the modern city of Vera Cruz. Little did the Conqueror imagine that the desolate beach on which he first planted his foot was one day to be covered by a flourishing city, the great mart of European and Oriental trade, the commercial capital of New Spain.[8]

It was a wide and level plain, except where the sand had been drifted into hillocks by the perpetual blowing of the *norte*. On these sand-hills he mounted his little battery of guns, so as to give him the command of the country. He then employed the troops in cutting down small trees and bushes which grew near, in order to provide a shelter from the weather. In this he was aided by the people of the country, sent, as it appeared, by the governor of the district to assist the Spaniards. With their help stakes were firmly set in the earth, and covered with boughs, and with mats and cotton carpets, which the friendly natives brought with them. In this way they secured, in a couple of days, a good defence against the scorching rays of the sun, which beat with intolerable fierceness on the sands. The place was surrounded by stagnant marshes, the exhalations from which, quickened by the heat into the pestilent malaria, have occasioned in later times wider mortality to Europeans than all the hurricanes on the coast. The bilious disorders, now the terrible scourge of the *tierra caliente*, were little known before the Conquest. The

[8] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 79.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. iii. p. 16.—New Vera Cruz, as the present town is called, is distinct, as we shall see hereafter, from that established by Cortés, and was not founded till the close of the sixteenth century, by the Conde de Monterey, Viceroy of Mexico. It received its privileges as a city from Philip III. in 1615. Ibid., tom. iii. p. 30, nota.

seeds of the poison seem to have been scattered by the hand of civilization; for it is only necessary to settle a town, and draw together a busy European population, in order to call out the malignity of the venom which had before lurked innoxious in the atmosphere.[9]

While these arrangements were in progress, the natives flocked in from the adjacent district, which was tolerably populous in the interior, drawn by a natural curiosity to see the wonderful strangers. They brought with them fruits, vegetables, flowers in abundance, game, and many dishes cooked after the fashion of the country, with little articles of gold and other ornaments. They gave away some as presents, and bartered others for the wares of the Spaniards; so that the camp, crowded with a motley throng of every age and sex, wore the appearance of a fair. From some of the visitors Cortés learned the intention of the governor to wait on him the following day.

This was Easter. Teuhtlile arrived, as he had announced, before noon. He was attended by a numerous train, and was met by Cortés, who conducted him

9 The epidemic of the *matlazahuatl*, so fatal to the Aztecs, is shown by M. de Humboldt to have been essentially different from the *vómito*, or bilious fever of our day. Indeed, this disease is not noticed by the early conquerors and colonists, and, Clavigero asserts, was not known in Mexico till 1725. (Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 117, nota.) Humboldt, however, arguing that the same physical causes must have produced similar results, carries the disease back to a much higher antiquity, of which he discerns some traditional and historic vestiges. "Il ne faut pas confondre l'époque," he remarks, with his usual penetration, "à laquelle une maladie a été décrite pour la première fois, parce qu'elle a fait de grands ravages dans un court espace de temps, avec l'époque de sa première apparition." Essai politique, tom. iv. p. 161 et seq., and 179.

with much ceremony to his tent, where his principal officers were assembled. The Aztec chief returned their salutations with polite though formal courtesy. Mass was first said by Father Olmedo, and the service was listened to by Teuhtlile and his attendants with decent reverence. A collation was afterwards served, at which the general entertained his guest with Spanish wines and confections. The interpreters were then introduced, and a conversation commenced between the parties.

The first inquiries of Teuhtlile were respecting the country of the strangers and the purport of their visit. Cortés told him that "he was the subject of a potent monarch beyond the seas, who ruled over an immense empire, and had kings and princes for his vassals; that, acquainted with the greatness of the Mexican emperor, his master had desired to enter into a communication with him, and had sent him as his envoy to wait on Montezuma with a present in token of his good will, and a message which he must deliver in person." He concluded by inquiring of Teuhtlile when he could be admitted to his sovereign's presence.

To this the Aztec noble somewhat haughtily replied, "How is it that you have been here only two days, and demand to see the emperor?" He then added, with more courtesy, that "he was surprised to learn there was another monarch as powerful as Montezuma, but that, if it were so, he had no doubt his master would be happy to communicate with him. He would send his couriers with the royal gift brought by the Spanish commander, and, so soon as he had learned Montezuma's will, would communicate it."

Teuhtlile then commanded his slaves to bring forward the present intended for the Spanish general. It consisted of ten loads of fine cottons, several mantles of that curious feather-work whose rich and delicate dyes might vie with the most beautiful painting, and a wicker basket filled with ornaments of wrought gold, all calculated to inspire the Spaniards with high ideas of the wealth and mechanical ingenuity of the Mexicans.

Cortés received these presents with suitable acknowledgments, and ordered his own attendants to lay before the chief the articles designed for Montezuma. These were an arm-chair richly carved and painted, a crimson cap of cloth, having a gold medal emblazoned with St. George and the dragon, and a quantity of collars, bracelets, and other ornaments of cut glass, which, in a country where glass was not to be had, might claim to have the value of real gems, and no doubt passed for such with the inexperienced Mexican. Teuhtlile observed a soldier in the camp with a shining gilt helmet on his head, which he said reminded him of one worn by the god Quetzalcoatl in Mexico; and he showed a desire that Montezuma should see it. The coming of the Spaniards, as the reader will soon see, was associated with some traditions of this same deity. Cortés expressed his willingness that the casque should be sent to the emperor, intimating a hope that it would be returned filled with the gold dust of the country, that he might be able to compare its quality with that in his own! He further told the governor, as we are informed by his chaplain, "that the Spaniards were troubled with a disease of the heart, for which gold was

a specific remedy"![10] "In short," says Las Casas, "he contrived to make his want of gold very clear to the governor."[11]

While these things were passing, Cortés observed one of Teuhtlile's attendants busy with a pencil, apparently delineating some object. On looking at his work, he found that it was a sketch on canvas of the Spaniards, their costumes, arms, and, in short, different objects of interest, giving to each its appropriate form and color. This was the celebrated picture-writing of the Aztecs, and, as Teuhtlile informed him, this man was employed in portraying the various objects for the eye of Montezuma, who would thus gather a more vivid notion of their appearance than from any description by words. Cortés was pleased with the idea; and, as he knew how much the effect would be heightened by converting still life into action, he ordered out the cavalry on the beach, the wet sands of which afforded a firm footing for the horses. The bold and rapid movements of the troops, as they went through their military exercises; the apparent ease with which they managed the fiery animals on which they were mounted; the glancing of their weapons, and the shrill cry of the trumpet, all filled the spectators with astonishment; but when they heard the thunders of the cannon, which Cortés ordered to be fired at the same time, and witnessed the volumes of smoke and flame issuing from these terrible engines, and the rushing sound of the balls, as they dashed through the trees of the neighboring forest, shivering their branches into fragments,

[10] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 26.

[11] Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 119.

they were filled with consternation, from which the Aztec chief himself was not wholly free.

Nothing of all this was lost on the painters, who faithfully recorded, after their fashion, every particular; not omitting the ships,—"the water-houses," as they called them, of the strangers,—which, with their dark hulls and snow-white sails reflected from the water, were swinging lazily at anchor on the calm bosom of the bay. All was depicted with a fidelity that excited in their turn the admiration of the Spaniards, who, doubtless, unprepared for this exhibition of skill, greatly overestimated the merits of the execution.*

These various matters completed, Teuhtlile with his attendants withdrew from the Spanish quarters, with the same ceremony with which he had entered them; leaving orders that his people should supply the troops with provisions and other articles requisite for their accommodation, till further instructions from the capital.[12]

[12] Ixtlilxochitl, Relaciones, MS., No. 13.—Idem, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 79.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 25, 26.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 38.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 5, cap. 4.—Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 13-15.—Tezozomoc, Crón. Mexicana, MS., cap. 107.

* [According to a curious document published by Icazbalceta (Col. de Doc. para la Hist. de México, tom. ii.), two of the principal caciques present on this occasion communicated secretly with Cortés, and, declaring themselves disaffected subjects of Montezuma, offered to facilitate the advance of the Spaniards by furnishing the general with paintings in which the various features of the country would be correctly delineated. The offer was accepted, and on the next visit the paintings were produced, and proved subsequently of great service to Cortés, who rewarded the donors with certain grants. But the genuineness of this paper, though supported by so distinguished a scholar as Señor Ramirez, is more than questionable.—ED.]

CHAPTER VI.

ACCOUNT OF MONTEZUMA. — STATE OF HIS EMPIRE. — STRANGE PROGNOSTICS. — EMBASSY AND PRESENTS. — SPANISH ENCAMPMENT.

1519.

We must now take leave of the Spanish camp in the *tierra caliente*, and transport ourselves to the distant capital of Mexico, where no little sensation was excited by the arrival of the wonderful strangers on the coast. The Aztec throne was filled at that time by Montezuma the Second, nephew of the last, and grandson of a preceding monarch. He had been elected to the regal dignity in 1502, in preference to his brothers, for his superior qualifications both as a soldier and a priest,— a combination of offices sometimes found in the Mexican candidates, as it was more frequently in the Egyptian. In early youth he had taken an active part in the wars of the empire, though of late he had devoted himself more exclusively to the services of the temple; and he was scrupulous in his attentions to all the burdensome ceremonial of the Aztec worship. He maintained a grave and reserved demeanor, speaking little and with prudent deliberation. His deportment was well calculated to inspire ideas of superior sanctity.[1]

[1] His name suited his nature; Montezuma, according to Las Casas, signifying, in the Mexican, "sad or severe man." Hist. de las Indias,

When his election was announced to him, he was found sweeping down the stairs in the great temple of the national war-god. He received the messengers with a becoming humility, professing his unfitness for so responsible a station. The address delivered as usual on the occasion was made by his relative Nezahualpilli, the wise king of Tezcuco.[2] It has, fortunately, been preserved, and presents a favorable specimen of Indian eloquence. Towards the conclusion, the orator exclaims, "Who can doubt that the Aztec empire has reached the zenith of its greatness, since the Almighty has placed over it one whose very presence fills every beholder with reverence? Rejoice, happy people, that you have now a sovereign who will be to you a steady column of support; a father in distress, a more than brother in tenderness and sympathy; one whose aspiring soul will disdain all the profligate pleasures of the senses and the wasting indulgence of sloth. And thou, illustrious youth, doubt not that the Creator, who has laid on thee so weighty a charge, will also give strength to sustain it; that He, who has been so liberal in times past, will shower yet more abundant blessings on thy head, and keep thee firm in thy royal seat through many long and glorious years." These golden prognostics, which melted the royal auditor into tears, were not destined to be realized.[3]

MS., lib. 3, cap. 120.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 70.—Acosta, lib. 7, cap. 20.—Col. de Mendoza, pp. 13–16; Codex Tel.-Rem., p. 143, ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi.

[2] For a full account of this prince, see Book I., chap. 6.

[3] The address is fully reported by Torquemada (Monarch. Ind., lib. 3, cap. 68), who came into the country little more than half a century after its delivery. It has been recently republished by Bustamante. Tezcuco en los últimos Tiempos (México, 1826), pp. 256–258.

Montezuma displayed all the energy and enterprise in the commencement of his reign which had been anticipated from him. His first expedition against a rebel province in the neighborhood was crowned with success, and he led back in triumph a throng of captives for the bloody sacrifice that was to grace his coronation. This was celebrated with uncommon pomp. Games and religious ceremonies continued for several days, and among the spectators who flocked from distant quarters were some noble Tlascalans, the hereditary enemies of Mexico. They were in disguise, hoping thus to elude detection. They were recognized, however, and reported to the monarch. But he only availed himself of the information to provide them with honorable entertainment and a good place for witnessing the games. This was a magnanimous act, considering the long-cherished hostility between the nations.

In his first years, Montezuma was constantly engaged in war, and frequently led his armies in person. The Aztec banners were seen in the farthest provinces on the Gulf of Mexico, and the distant regions of Nicaragua and Honduras. The expeditions were generally successful; and the limits of the empire were more widely extended than at any preceding period.

Meanwhile the monarch was not inattentive to the interior concerns of the kingdom. He made some important changes in the courts of justice, and carefully watched over the execution of the laws, which he enforced with stern severity. He was in the habit of patrolling the streets of his capital in disguise, to make himself personally acquainted with the abuses in it.

And with more questionable policy, it is said, he would sometimes try the integrity of his judges by tempting them with large bribes to swerve from their duty, and then call the delinquent to strict account for yielding to the temptation.

He liberally recompensed all who served him. He showed a similar munificent spirit in his public works, constructing and embellishing the temples, bringing water into the capital by a new channel, and establishing a hospital, or retreat for invalid soldiers, in the city of Colhuacan.[4]

These acts, so worthy of a great prince, were counterbalanced by others of an opposite complexion. The humility, displayed so ostentatiously before his elevation, gave way to an intolerable arrogance. In his pleasure-houses, domestic establishment, and way of living, he assumed a pomp unknown to his predecessors. He secluded himself from public observation, or, when he went abroad, exacted the most slavish homage; while in the palace he would be served only, even in the most menial offices, by persons of rank. He, further, dismissed several plebeians, chiefly poor soldiers of merit, from the places they had occupied near the person of his predecessor, considering their attendance a dishonor to royalty. It was in vain that his oldest and sagest counsellors remonstrated on a conduct so impolitic.

While he thus disgusted his subjects by his haughty deportment, he alienated their affections by the impo-

[4] Acosta, lib. 7, cap. 22.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 8, Prólogo, et cap. 1.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 3, cap. 73, 74, 81.—Col. de Mendoza, pp. 14, 85, ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi.

sition of grievous taxes. These were demanded by the lavish expenditure of his court. They fell with peculiar heaviness on the conquered cities. This oppression led to frequent insurrection and resistance; and the latter years of his reign present a scene of unintermitting hostility, in which the forces of one half of the empire were employed in suppressing the commotions of the other. Unfortunately, there was no principle of amalgamation by which the new acquisitions could be incorporated into the ancient monarchy as parts of one whole. Their interests, as well as sympathies, were different. Thus the more widely the Aztec empire was extended, the weaker it became; resembling some vast and ill-proportioned edifice, whose disjointed materials, having no principle of cohesion, and tottering under their own weight, seem ready to fall before the first blast of the tempest.

In 1516 died the Tezcucan king, Nezahualpilli; in whom Montezuma lost his most sagacious counsellor. The succession was contested by his two sons, Cacama and Ixtlilxochitl. The former was supported by Montezuma. The latter, the younger of the princes, a bold, aspiring youth, appealing to the patriotic sentiment of his nation, would have persuaded them that his brother was too much in the Mexican interests to be true to his own country. A civil war ensued, and ended by a compromise, by which one half of the kingdom, with the capital, remained to Cacama, and the northern portion to his ambitious rival. Ixtlilxochitl became from that time the mortal foe of Montezuma.[5]

5 Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. i. pp. 267, 274, 275.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 70–76.—Acosta, lib. 7, cap. 21.

A more formidable enemy still was the little republic of Tlascala, lying midway between the Mexican Valley and the coast. It had maintained its independence for more than two centuries against the allied forces of the empire. Its resources were unimpaired, its civilization scarcely below that of its great rival states, and for courage and military prowess it had established a name inferior to none other of the nations of Anahuac.

Such was the condition of the Aztec monarchy on the arrival of Cortés;—the people disgusted with the arrogance of the sovereign; the provinces and distant cities outraged by fiscal exactions; while potent enemies in the neighborhood lay watching the hour when they might assail their formidable rival with advantage. Still the kingdom was strong in its internal resources, in the will of its monarch, in the long habitual deference to his authority,—in short, in the terror of his name, and in the valor and discipline of his armies, grown gray in active service, and well drilled in all the tactics of Indian warfare. The time had now come when these imperfect tactics and rude weapons of the barbarian were to be brought into collision with the science and enginery of the most civilized nations of the globe.

During the latter years of his reign, Montezuma had rarely taken part in his military expeditions, which he left to his captains, occupying himself chiefly with his sacerdotal functions. Under no prince had the priesthood enjoyed greater consideration and immunities. The religious festivals and rites were celebrated with unprecedented pomp. The oracles were consulted on the most trivial occasions; and the sanguinary deities

were propitiated by hecatombs of victims dragged in triumph to the capital from the conquered or rebellious provinces. The religion, or, to speak correctly, the superstition of Montezuma proved a principal cause of his calamities.

In a preceding chapter I have noticed the popular traditions respecting Quetzalcoatl, that deity with a fair complexion and flowing beard, so unlike the Indian physiognomy, who, after fulfilling his mission of benevolence among the Aztecs, embarked on the Atlantic Sea for the mysterious shores of Tlapallan.[6] He promised, on his departure, to return at some future day with his posterity, and resume the possession of his empire. That day was looked forward to with hope or with apprehension, according to the interest of the believer, but with general confidence, throughout the wide borders of Anahuac. Even after the Conquest it still lingered among the Indian races, by whom it was as fondly cherished as the advent of their king Sebastian continued to be by the Portuguese, or that of the Messiah by the Jews.[7]

A general feeling seems to have prevailed in the time of Montezuma that the period for the return of the deity and the full accomplishment of his promise was near at hand. This conviction is said to have gained ground from various preternatural occurrences, reported with more or less detail by all the most ancient histo-

[6] *Ante*, Book I., chap. 3, pp. 60, 61, and note 6.

[7] Tezozomoc, Crón. Mexicana, MS., cap. 107.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 1.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 14; lib. 6, cap. 24.—Codex Vaticanus, ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 8, cap. 7.—Ibid., MS., lib. 12, cap. 3, 4.

rians.[8] In 1510 the great lake of Tezcuco, without the occurrence of a tempest, or earthquake, or any other visible cause, became violently agitated, overflowed its banks, and, pouring into the streets of Mexico, swept off many of the buildings by the fury of the waters. In 1511 one of the turrets of the great temple took fire, equally without any apparent cause, and continued to burn in defiance of all attempts to extinguish it. In the following years, three comets were seen; and not long before the coming of the Spaniards a strange light broke forth in the east. It spread broad at its base on the horizon, and rising in a pyramidal form tapered off as it approached the zenith. It resembled a vast sheet or flood of fire, emitting sparkles, or, as an old writer expresses it, "seemed thickly powdered with stars."[9] At the same time, low voices were heard in the air, and doleful wailings, as if to announce some strange, mysterious calamity! The Aztec monarch, terrified at the apparitions in the heavens, took counsel of Nezahualpilli, who was a great proficient in the subtle science of astrology. But the royal sage cast a deeper cloud over his spirit by reading in these prodigies the speedy downfall of the empire.[10]

[8] "Tenia por cierto," says Las Casas of Montezuma, "segun sus prophetas ó agoreros le avian certificado, que su estado é rriquezas y prosperidad avia de perezer dentro de pocos años por çiertas gentes que avian de venir en sus dias, que de su felicidad lo derrocase, y por esto vivia siempre con temor y en tristeça y sobresaltado." Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 120.

[9] Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—The Interpreter of the Codex Tel.-Rem. intimates that this scintillating phenomenon was probably nothing more than an eruption of one of the great volcanoes of Mexico. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi. p. 144.

[10] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 1.—Ca-

Such are the strange stories reported by the chroniclers, in which it is not impossible to detect the glimmerings of truth.[11] Nearly thirty years had elapsed since the discovery of the Islands by Columbus, and more than twenty since his visit to the American continent. Rumors, more or less distinct, of this wonderful appearance of the white men, bearing in their hands the thunder and the lightning, so like in many respects to the traditions of Quetzalcoatl, would naturally spread far and wide among the Indian nations. Such rumors, doubtless, long before the landing of the Spaniards in Mexico, found their way up the grand plateau, filling the minds of men with anticipations of the near coming of the period when the great deity was to return and receive his own again.

In the excited state of their imaginations, prodigies became a familiar occurrence. Or rather, events not very uncommon in themselves, seen through the discolored medium of fear, were easily magnified into prodigies; and the accidental swell of the lake, the appearance of a comet, and the conflagration of a building were all interpreted as the special annunciations of Heaven.[12] Thus it happens in those great

margo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Acosta, lib. 7, cap. 23.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 5, cap. 5.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 74.

[11] I omit the most extraordinary miracle of all,—though legal attestations of its truth were furnished the court of Rome (see Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 289),—namely, the resurrection of Montezuma's sister, Papantzin, four days after her burial, to warn the monarch of the approaching ruin of his empire. It finds credit with one writer, at least, in the nineteenth century! See the note of Sahagun's Mexican editor, Bustamante, Hist. de Nueva-España, tom. ii. p. 270.

[12] Lucan gives a fine enumeration of such prodigies witnessed in

political convulsions which shake the foundations of society,—the mighty events that cast their shadows before them in their coming. Then it is that the atmosphere is agitated with the low, prophetic murmurs with which Nature, in the moral as in the physical world, announces the march of the hurricane:

> "When from the shores
> And forest-rustling mountains comes a voice,
> That, solemn sounding, bids the world prepare!"

When tidings were brought to the capital of the landing of Grijalva on the coast, in the preceding year, the heart of Montezuma was filled with dismay. He felt as if the destinies which had so long brooded over the royal line of Mexico were to be accomplished, and the sceptre was to pass away from his house forever. Though somewhat relieved by the departure of the Spaniards, he caused sentinels to be stationed on the heights; and, when the Europeans returned under Cortés, he doubtless received the earliest notice of the unwelcome event. It was by his orders, however, that the provincial governor had prepared so hospitable a reception for them. The hieroglyphical report of these strange visitors, now forwarded to the capital, revived all his apprehensions. He called, without delay, a meeting of his principal counsellors, including the

the Roman capital in a similar excitement. (Pharsalia, lib. 1, v. 523, et seq.) Poor human nature is much the same everywhere. Machiavelli has thought the subject worthy of a separate chapter in his Discourses. The philosopher even intimates a belief in the existence of beneficent intelligences who send these portents as a sort of *premonitories*, to warn mankind of the coming tempest. Discorsi sopra Tito Livio, lib. 1, cap. 56.

kings of Tezcuco and Tlacopan, and laid the matter before them.[13]

There seems to have been much division of opinion in that body. Some were for resisting the strangers at once, whether by fraud or by open force. Others contended that, if they were supernatural beings, fraud and force would be alike useless. If they were, as they pretended, ambassadors from a foreign prince, such a policy would be cowardly and unjust. That they were not of the family of Quetzalcoatl was argued from the fact that they had shown themselves hostile to his religion; for tidings of the proceedings of the Spaniards in Tabasco, it seems, had already reached the capital. Among those in favor of giving them a friendly and honorable reception was the Tezcucan king, Cacama.

But Montezuma, taking counsel of his own ill-defined apprehensions, preferred a half-way course,—as usual, the most impolitic. He resolved to send an embassy, with such a magnificent present to the strangers as should impress them with high ideas of his grandeur and resources; while at the same time he would forbid their approach to the capital. This was to reveal at once both his wealth and his weakness.[14]

While the Aztec court was thus agitated by the arrival of the Spaniards, they were passing their time in the *tierra caliente*, not a little annoyed by the excessive

[13] Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 120.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 80.—Idem, Relaciones, MS.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 3, 4.—Tezozomoc, Crón. Mexicana, MS., cap. 108.

[14] Tezozomoc, Crón. Mexicana, MS., loc. cit.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 80.

heats and suffocating atmosphere of the sandy waste on which they were encamped. They experienced every alleviation that could be derived from the attentions of the friendly natives. These, by the governor's command, had constructed more than a thousand huts or booths of branches and matting, which they occupied in the neighborhood of the camp. Here they prepared various articles of food for the tables of Cortés and his officers, without any recompense; while the common soldiers easily obtained a supply for themselves, in exchange for such trifles as they brought with them for barter. Thus the camp was liberally provided with meat and fish dressed in many savory ways, with cakes of corn, bananas, pine-apples, and divers luscious vegetables of the tropics, hitherto unknown to the Spaniards. The soldiers contrived, moreover, to obtain many little bits of gold, of no great value, indeed, from the natives; a traffic very displeasing to the partisans of Velasquez, who considered it an invasion of his rights. Cortés, however, did not think it prudent, in this matter, to balk the inclinations of his followers.[15]

At the expiration of seven, or eight days at most, the Mexican embassy presented itself before the camp. It may seem an incredibly short space of time, considering the distance of the capital was near seventy leagues. But it may be remembered that tidings were carried there by means of posts, as already noticed, in the brief space of four-and-twenty hours;[16] and four or five

[15] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 39.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 27, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.

[16] *Ante*, Book 1, chap. 2, p. 44.

days would suffice for the descent of the envoys to the coast, accustomed as the Mexicans were to long and rapid travelling. At all events, no writer states the period occupied by the Indian emissaries on this occasion as longer than that mentioned.

The embassy, consisting of two Aztec nobles, was accompanied by the governor, Teuhtlile, and by a hundred slaves, bearing the princely gifts of Montezuma. One of the envoys had been selected on account of the great resemblance which, as appeared from the painting representing the camp, he bore to the Spanish commander. And it is a proof of the fidelity of the painting, that the soldiers recognized the resemblance, and always distinguished the chief by the name of the "Mexican Cortés."

On entering the general's pavilion, the ambassadors saluted him and his officers with the usual signs of reverence to persons of great consideration, touching the ground with their hands and then carrying them to their heads, while the air was filled with clouds of incense, which rose up from the censers borne by their attendants. Some delicately wrought mats of the country (*petates*) were then unrolled, and on them the slaves displayed the various articles they had brought. They were of the most miscellaneous kind: shields, helmets, cuirasses, embossed with plates and ornaments of pure gold; collars and bracelets of the same metal, sandals, fans, *panaches* and crests of variegated feathers, intermingled with gold and silver thread, and sprinkled with pearls and precious stones; imitations of birds and animals in wrought and cast gold and silver, of exquisite workmanship; curtains, coverlets, and robes

of cotton, fine as silk, of rich and various dyes, interwoven with feather-work that rivalled the delicacy of painting.[17] There were more than thirty loads of cotton cloth in addition. Among the articles was the Spanish helmet sent to the capital, and now returned filled to the brim with grains of gold. But the things which excited the most admiration were two circular plates of gold and silver, "as large as carriage-wheels." One, representing the sun, was richly carved with plants and animals,—no doubt, denoting the Aztec century. It was thirty palms in circumference, and was valued at twenty thousand *pesos de oro*. The silver wheel, of the same size, weighed fifty marks.[18]

[17] From the checkered figure of some of these colored cottons, Peter Martyr infers, the Indians were acquainted with chess! He notices a curious fabric made of the hair of animals, feathers, and cotton thread, interwoven together. "Plumas illas et concinnant inter cuniculorum villos interque gosampij stamina ordiuntur, et intexunt operose adeo, ut quo pacto id faciant non bene intellexerimus." De Orbe Novo (Parisiis, 1587), dec. 5, cap. 10.

[18] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 39.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 1.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 120.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 27, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.—Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 5, cap. 5.—Robertson cites Bernal Diaz as reckoning the value of the silver plate at 20,000 *pesos*, or about £5000. (History of America, vol. ii. note 75.) But Bernal Diaz speaks only of the value of the gold plate, which he estimates at 20,000 *pesos de oro*, different from the *pesos*, dollars, or ounces of silver, with which the historian confounds them. As the mention of the *peso de oro* will often recur in these pages, it will be well to make the reader acquainted with its probable value. Nothing is more difficult than to ascertain the actual value of the currency of a distant age; so many circumstances occur to embarrass the calculation, besides the general depreciation of the precious metals, such as the adulteration of specific coins, and the like. Señor Clemencin, the Secretary of the Royal Academy of History, in

The Spaniards could not conceal their rapture at the exhibition of treasures which so far surpassed all the dreams in which they had indulged. For, rich as were the materials, they were exceeded—according to the testimony of those who saw these articles afterwards in Seville, where they could coolly examine them—by the beauty and richness of the workmanship.[19]

the sixth volume of its *Memorias*, has computed with great accuracy the value of the different denominations of the Spanish currency at the close of the fifteenth century, the period just preceding that of the conquest of Mexico. He makes no mention of the *peso de oro* in his tables. But he ascertains the precise value of the gold ducat, which will answer our purpose as well. (Memorias de la Real Academia de Historia (Madrid, 1821), tom. vi. Ilust. 20.) Oviedo, a contemporary of the Conquerors, informs us that the *peso de oro* and the *castellano* were of the same value, and that was precisely one-third greater than the value of the ducat. (Hist. del Ind., lib. 6, cap. 8, ap. Ramusio, Navigationi et Viaggi (Venetia, 1565), tom. iii.) Now, the ducat, as appears from Clemencin, reduced to our own currency, would be equal to eight dollars and seventy-five cents. *The peso de oro, therefore, was equal to eleven dollars and sixty-seven cents, or two pounds, twelve shillings, and sixpence sterling.* Keeping this in mind, it will be easy for the reader to determine the actual value, in *pesos de oro*, of any sum that may be hereafter mentioned.

[19] "¡Cierto cosas de ver!" exclaims Las Casas, who saw them with the Emperor Charles V. in Seville, in 1520. "Quedáron todos los que viéron aquestas cosas tan ricas y tan bien artifiçiadas y ermosísimas como de cosas nunca vistas," etc. (Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 120.) "Muy hermosas," says Oviedo, who saw them in Valladolid, and describes the great wheels more minutely; "todo era mucho de ver!" (Hist. de las Indias, MS., loc. cit.) The inquisitive Martyr, who examined them carefully, remarks, yet more emphatically, "Si quid unquam honoris humana ingenia in huiuscemodi artibus sunt adepta, principatum iure merito ista consequentur. Aurum, gemmasque non admiror quidem, quâ industriâ, quóve studio superet opus materiam, stupeo. Mille figuras et facies mille prospexi quæ scribere nequeo. Quid oculos hominum suâ pulchritudine æque possit allicere meo iudicio vidi nunquam." De Orbe Novo, dec. 4, cap. 9.

When Cortés and his officers had completed their survey, the ambassadors courteously delivered the message of Montezuma. "It gave their master great pleasure," they said, "to hold this communication with so powerful a monarch as the King of Spain, for whom he felt the most profound respect. He regretted much that he could not enjoy a personal interview with the Spaniards, but the distance of his capital was too great; since the journey was beset with difficulties, and with too many dangers from formidable enemies, to make it possible. All that could be done, therefore, was for the strangers to return to their own land, with the proofs thus afforded them of his friendly disposition."

Cortés, though much chagrined at this decided refusal of Montezuma to admit his visit, concealed his mortification as he best might, and politely expressed his sense of the emperor's munificence. "It made him only the more desirous," he said, "to have a personal interview with him. He should feel it, indeed, impossible to present himself again before his own sovereign, without having accomplished this great object of his voyage; and one who had sailed over two thousand leagues of ocean held lightly the perils and fatigues of so short a journey by land." He once more requested them to become the bearers of his message to their master, together with a slight additional token of his respect.

This consisted of a few fine Holland shirts, a Florentine goblet, gilt and somewhat curiously enamelled, with some toys of little value,—a sorry return for the solid magnificence of the royal present. The ambassadors may have thought as much. At least, they

showed no alacrity in charging themselves either with the present or the message, and, on quitting the Castilian quarters, repeated their assurance that the general's application would be unavailing.[20]

The splendid treasure, which now lay dazzling the eyes of the Spaniards, raised in their bosoms very different emotions, according to the difference of their characters. Some it stimulated with the ardent desire to strike at once into the interior and possess themselves of a country which teemed with such boundless stores of wealth. Others looked on it as the evidence of a power altogether too formidable to be encountered with their present insignificant force. They thought, therefore, it would be most prudent to return and report their proceedings to the governor of Cuba, where preparations could be made commensurate with so vast an undertaking. There can be little doubt as to the impression made on the bold spirit of Cortés, on which difficulties ever operated as incentives, rather than discouragements, to enterprise. But he prudently said nothing,—at least in public,—preferring that so important a movement should flow from the determination of his whole army, rather than from his own individual impulse.

Meanwhile the soldiers suffered greatly from the inconveniences of their position amidst burning sands and the pestilent effluvia of the neighboring marshes, while the venomous insects of these hot regions left them no repose, day or night. Thirty of their number

[20] Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 121.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 39.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 80.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 27, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.

had already sickened and died; a loss that could ill be afforded by the little band. To add to their troubles, the coldness of the Mexican chiefs had extended to their followers; and the supplies for the camp were not only much diminished, but the prices set on them were exorbitant. The position was equally unfavorable for the shipping, which lay in an open roadstead, exposed to the fury of the first *norte* which should sweep the Mexican Gulf.

The general was induced by these circumstances to despatch two vessels, under Francisco de Montejo, with the experienced Alaminos for his pilot, to explore the coast in a northerly direction, and see if a safer port and more commodious quarters for the army could not be found there.

After the lapse of ten days the Mexican envoys returned. They entered the Spanish quarters with the same formality as on the former visit, bearing with them an additional present of rich stuffs and metallic ornaments, which, though inferior in value to those before brought, were estimated at three thousand ounces of gold. Besides these, there were four precious stones, of a considerable size, resembling emeralds, called by the natives *chalchuites*, each of which, as they assured the Spaniards, was worth more than a load of gold, and was designed as a mark of particular respect for the Spanish monarch.[21] Unfortunately, they were not worth as many loads of earth in Europe.

[21] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 40.—Father Sahagun thus describes these stones, so precious in Mexico that the use of them was interdicted to any but the nobles: "The *chalchuites* are of a green color mixed with white, and are not transparent. They are

Montezuma's answer was in substance the same as before. It contained a positive prohibition for the strangers to advance nearer to the capital, and expressed his confidence that, now they had obtained what they had most desired, they would return to their own country without unnecessary delay. Cortés received this unpalatable response courteously, though somewhat coldly, and, turning to his officers, exclaimed, "This is a rich and powerful prince indeed; yet it shall go hard but we will one day pay him a visit in his capital!"

While they were conversing, the bell struck for vespers. At the sound, the soldiers, throwing themselves on their knees, offered up their orisons before the large wooden cross planted in the sands. As the Aztec chiefs gazed with curious surprise, Cortés thought it a favorable occasion to impress them with what he conceived to be a principal object of his visit to the country. Father Olmedo accordingly expounded, as briefly and clearly as he could, the great doctrines of Christianity, touching on the atonement, the passion, and the resurrection, and concluding with assuring his astonished audience that it was their intention to extirpate the idolatrous practices of the nation and to substitute the pure worship of the true God. He then put into their hands a little image of the Virgin with the infant Redeemer, requesting them to place it in their temples instead of their sanguinary deities. How far the Aztec lords comprehended the mysteries of the faith, as con-

much worn by persons of rank, and, attached to the wrist by a thread, are a token of the nobility of the wearer." Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 11, cap. 8.

veyed through the double version of Aguilar and Marina, or how well they perceived the subtle distinctions between their own images and those of the Roman Church, we are not informed. There is reason to fear, however, that the seed fell on barren ground; for, when the homily of the good father ended, they withdrew with an air of dubious reserve very different from their friendly manners at the first interview. The same night every hut was deserted by the natives, and the Spaniards saw themselves suddenly cut off from supplies in the midst of a desolate wilderness. The movement had so suspicious an appearance that Cortés apprehended an attack would be made on his quarters, and took precautions accordingly. But none was meditated.

The army was at length cheered by the return of Montejo from his exploring expedition, after an absence of twelve days. He had run down the Gulf as far as Panuco, where he experienced such heavy gales, in attempting to double that headland, that he was driven back, and had nearly foundered. In the whole course of the voyage he had found only one place tolerably sheltered from the north winds. Fortunately, the adjacent country, well watered by fresh, running streams, afforded a favorable position for the camp; and thither, after some deliberation, it was determined to repair.[22]

[22] Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 121.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 40, 41.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 5, cap. 6.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 29, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.

CHAPTER VII.

TROUBLES IN THE CAMP.—PLAN OF A COLONY.—MANAGEMENT OF CORTÉS.—MARCH TO CEMPOALLA.—PROCEEDINGS WITH THE NATIVES.—FOUNDATION OF VERA CRUZ.

1519.

THERE is no situation which tries so severely the patience and discipline of the soldier as a life of idleness in camp, where his thoughts, instead of being bent on enterprise and action, are fastened on himself and the inevitable privations and dangers of his condition. This was particularly the case in the present instance, where, in addition to the evils of a scanty subsistence, the troops suffered from excessive heat, swarms of venomous insects, and the other annoyances of a sultry climate. They were, moreover, far from possessing the character of regular forces, trained to subordination under a commander whom they had long been taught to reverence and obey. They were soldiers of fortune, embarked with him in an adventure in which all seemed to have an equal stake, and they regarded their captain—the captain of a day—as little more than an equal.

There was a growing discontent among the men at their longer residence in this strange land. They were still more dissatisfied on learning the general's intention to remove to the neighborhood of the port dis-

covered by Montejo. "It was time to return," they said, "and report what had been done to the governor of Cuba, and not linger on these barren shores until they had brought the whole Mexican empire on their heads!" Cortés evaded their importunities as well as he could, assuring them there was no cause for despondency. "Everything so far had gone on prosperously, and, when they had taken up a more favorable position, there was no reason to doubt they might still continue the same profitable intercourse with the natives."

While this was passing, five Indians made their appearance in the camp one morning, and were brought to the general's tent. Their dress and whole appearance were different from those of the Mexicans. They wore rings of gold, and gems of bright blue stone in their ears and nostrils, while a gold leaf delicately wrought was attached to the under lip. Marina was unable to comprehend their language, but, on her addressing them in Aztec, two of them, it was found, could converse in that tongue. They said they were natives of Cempoalla, the chief town of the Totonacs, a powerful nation who had come upon the great plateau many centuries back, and, descending its eastern slope, settled along the sierras and broad plains which skirt the Mexican Gulf towards the north. Their country was one of the recent conquests of the Aztecs, and they experienced such vexatious oppressions from their conquerors as made them very impatient of the yoke. They informed Cortés of these and other particulars. The fame of the Spaniards had reached their master, who sent these messengers to request the presence of the wonderful strangers in his capital.

This communication was eagerly listened to by the general, who, it will be remembered, was possessed of none of those facts, laid before the reader, respecting the internal condition of the kingdom, which he had no reason to suppose other than strong and united. An important truth now flashed on his mind, as his quick eye descried in this spirit of discontent a potent lever, by the aid of which he might hope to overturn this barbaric empire. He received the mission of the Totonacs most graciously, and, after informing himself, as far as possible, of their dispositions and resources, dismissed them with presents, promising soon to pay a visit to their lord.[1]

Meanwhile, his personal friends, among whom may be particularly mentioned Alonso Hernandez Puertocarrero, Cristóbal de Olid, Alonso de Avila, Pedro de Alvarado and his brothers, were very busy in persuading the troops to take such measures as should enable Cortés to go forward in those ambitious plans for which he had no warrant from the powers of Velasquez. "To return now," they said, "was to abandon the enterprise on the threshold, which, under such a leader, must conduct to glory and incalculable riches. To return to Cuba would be to surrender to the greedy governor the little gains they had already got. The only way was to persuade the general to establish a permanent colony in the country, the government of which would take the conduct of matters into its own hands and provide for the interests of its members. It was true, Cortés had no such authority from Velasquez. But the in-

[1] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 41.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 121.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 28.

terests of the sovereigns, which were paramount to every other, imperatively demanded it."

These conferences could not be conducted so secretly, though held by night, as not to reach the ears of the friends of Velasquez.[2] They remonstrated against the proceedings, as insidious and disloyal. They accused the general of instigating them, and, calling on him to take measures without delay for the return of the troops to Cuba, announced their own intention to depart, with such followers as still remained true to the governor.

Cortés, instead of taking umbrage at this high-handed proceeding, or even answering in the same haughty tone, mildly replied "that nothing was further from his desire than to exceed his instructions. He, indeed, preferred to remain in the country, and continue his profitable intercourse with the natives. But, since the army thought otherwise, he should defer to their opinion, and give orders to return, as they desired." On the following morning, proclamation was made for the troops to hold themselves in readiness to embark at once on board the fleet, which was to sail for Cuba.[3]

Great was the sensation caused by their general's order. Even many of those before clamorous for it,

[2] The letter from the *cabildo* of Vera Cruz says nothing of these midnight conferences. Bernal Diaz, who was privy to them, is a sufficient authority. See Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 42.

[3] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 30.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 121.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 80.—Bernal Diaz, Ibid., loc. cit.—Declaracion de Puertocarrero, MS.—The deposition of a respectable person like Puertocarrero, taken in the spring of the following year, after his return to Spain, is a document of such authority that I have transferred it entire, in the original, to the Appendix, Part 2, No. 7.

with the usual caprice of men whose wishes are too easily gratified, now regretted it. The partisans of Cortés were loud in their remonstrances. "They were betrayed by the general," they cried, and, thronging round his tent, called on him to countermand his orders. "We came here," said they, "expecting to form a settlement, if the state of the country authorized it. Now it seems you have no warrant from the governor to make one. But there are interests, higher than those of Velasquez, which demand it. These territories are not his property, but were discovered for the sovereigns;[4] and it is necessary to plant a colony to watch over their interests, instead of wasting time in idle barter, or, still worse, of returning, in the present state of affairs, to Cuba. If you refuse," they concluded, "we shall protest against your conduct as disloyal to their Highnesses."

Cortés received this remonstrance with the embarrassed air of one by whom it was altogether unexpected. He modestly requested time for deliberation, and promised to give his answer on the following day. At the time appointed, he called the troops together, and made them a brief address. "There was no one," he

[4] Sometimes we find the Spanish writers referring to "the sovereigns," sometimes to "the emperor;" in the former case intending Queen Joanna, the crazy mother of Charles V., as well as himself. Indeed, all public acts and ordinances ran in the name of both. The title of "Highness," which until the reign of Charles V. had usually —not uniformly, as Robertson imagines (History of Charles V., vol. ii. p. 59)—been applied to the sovereign, now gradually gave way to that of "Majesty," which Charles affected after his election to the imperial throne. The same title is occasionally found in the correspondence of the Great Captain, and other courtiers of the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella.

said, "if he knew his own heart, more deeply devoted than himself to the welfare of his sovereigns and the glory of the Spanish name. He had not only expended his all, but incurred heavy debts, to meet the charges of this expedition, and had hoped to reimburse himself by continuing his traffic with the Mexicans. But, if the soldiers thought a different course advisable, he was ready to postpone his own advantage to the good of the state."[5] He concluded by declaring his willingness to take measures for settling a colony *in the name of the Spanish sovereigns*, and to nominate a magistracy to preside over it.[6]

For the *alcaldes* he selected Puertocarrero and Montejo, the former cavalier his fast friend, and the latter the friend of Velasquez, and chosen for that very reason; a stroke of policy which perfectly succeeded. The *regidores*, *alguacil*, treasurer, and other functionaries were then appointed, all of them his personal friends and adherents. They were regularly sworn into

[5] According to Robertson, Cortés told his men that he had proposed to establish a colony on the coast, before marching into the country; but he abandoned his design, at their entreaties to set out at once on the expedition. In the very next page we find him organizing this same colony. (History of America, vol. ii. pp. 241, 242.) The historian would have been saved this inconsistency, if he had followed either of the authorities whom he cites, Bernal Diaz and Herrera, or the letter from Vera Cruz, of which he had a copy. They all concur in the statement in the text.

[6] Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 122.—Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Declaracion de Montejo, MS.—Declaracion de Puertocarrero, MS.—"Our general, after some urging, acquiesced," says the blunt old soldier Bernal Diaz; "for, as the proverb says, 'You ask me to do what I have already made up my mind to.'" *Tu me lo ruegas, é yo me lo quiero.* Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 42.

office, and the new city received the title of *Villa Rica de Vera Cruz*, "The Rich Town of the True Cross;" a name which was considered as happily intimating that union of spiritual and temporal interests to which the arms of the Spanish adventurers in the New World were to be devoted.[7] Thus, by a single stroke of the pen, as it were, the camp was transformed into a civil community, and the whole frame-work and even title of the city were arranged, before the site of it had been settled.

The new municipality were not slow in coming together; when Cortés presented himself, cap in hand, before that august body, and, laying the powers of Velasquez on the table, respectfully tendered the resignation of his office of Captain-General, "which, indeed," he said, "had necessarily expired, since the authority of the governor was now superseded by that of the magistracy of Villa Rica de Vera Cruz." He then, with a profound obeisance, left the apartment.[8]

The council, after a decent time spent in deliberation, again requested his presence. "There was no one," they said, "who, on mature reflection, appeared

[7] According to Bernal Diaz, the title of "Vera Cruz" was intended to commemorate their landing on Good Friday. Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 42.

[8] Solís, whose taste for speech-making might have satisfied even the Abbé Mably (see his Treatise, "De la Manière d'écrire l'Histoire"), has put a very flourishing harangue on this occasion into the mouth of his hero, of which there is not a vestige in any contemporary account. (Conquista, lib. 2, cap. 7.) Dr. Robertson has transferred it to his own eloquent pages, without citing his author, indeed, who, considering he came a century and a half after the Conquest, must be allowed to be not the best, especially when the only, voucher for a fact.

to them so well qualified to take charge of the interests of the community, both in peace and in war, as himself; and they unanimously named him, in behalf of their Catholic Highnesses, Captain-General and Chief Justice of the colony." He was further empowered to draw, on his own account, one-fifth of the gold and silver which might hereafter be obtained by commerce or conquest from the natives.[9] Thus clothed with supreme civil and military jurisdiction, Cortés was not backward in asserting his authority. He found speedy occasion for it.

The transactions above described had succeeded each other so rapidly that the governor's party seemed to be taken by surprise, and had formed no plan of opposition. When the last measure was carried, however, they broke forth into the most indignant and opprobrious invectives, denouncing the whole as a systematic conspiracy against Velasquez. These accusations led to recrimination from the soldiers of the other side, until from words they nearly proceeded to blows. Some of the principal cavaliers, among them Velasquez de Leon, a kinsman of the governor, Escobar, his page, and Diego de Ordaz, were so active in instigating these turbulent movements that Cortés took the bold measure of putting them all in irons and sending them on board the vessels. He then dispersed the common file by detaching many of them with a

9 "Lo peor de todo que le otorgámos," says Bernal Diaz, somewhat peevishly, was, "que le dariamos el quinto del oro de lo que se huuiesse, despues de sacado el Real quinto." (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 42.) The letter from Vera Cruz says nothing of this fifth. The reader who would see the whole account of this remarkable transaction in the original may find it in the Appendix, Part 2, No. 8.

strong party under Alvarado to forage the neighboring country and bring home provisions for the destitute camp.

During their absence, every argument that cupidity or ambition could suggest was used to win the refractory to his views. Promises, and even gold, it is said, were liberally lavished; till, by degrees, their understandings were opened to a clearer view of the merits of the case. And when the foraging party reappeared with abundance of poultry and vegetables, and the cravings of the stomach—that great laboratory of disaffection, whether in camp or capital—were appeased, good humor returned with good cheer, and the rival factions embraced one another as companions in arms, pledged to a common cause. Even the high-mettled hidalgos on board the vessels did not long withstand the general tide of reconciliation, but one by one gave in their adhesion to the new government. What is more remarkable is that this forced conversion was not a hollow one, but from this time forward several of these very cavaliers became the most steady and devoted partisans of Cortés.[10]

[10] Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 30, 31.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 122.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 80.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 42.—Declaraciones de Montejo y Puertocarrero, MSS.—In the process of Narvaez against Cortés, the latter is accused of being possessed with the Devil, as only Lucifer could have thus gained him the affections of the soldiery. (Demanda de Narvaez, MS.) Solís, on the other hand, sees nothing but good faith and loyalty in the conduct of the general, who acted from a sense of duty! (Conquista, lib. 2, cap. 6, 7.) Solís is even a more steady apologist for his hero than his own chaplain, Gomara, or the worthy magistrates of Vera Cruz. A more impartial testimony than either, probably, may be gathered from

Such was the address of this extraordinary man, and such the ascendency which in a few months he had acquired over these wild and turbulent spirits! By this ingenious transformation of a military into a civil community, he had secured a new and effectual basis for future operations. He might now go forward without fear of check or control from a superior,—at least from any other superior than the crown, under which alone he held his commission. In accomplishing this, instead of incurring the charge of usurpation or of transcending his legitimate powers, he had transferred the responsibility, in a great measure, to those who had imposed on him the necessity of action. By this step, moreover, he had linked the fortunes of his followers indissolubly with his own. They had taken their chance with him, and, whether for weal or for woe, must abide the consequences. He was no longer limited to the narrow concerns of a sordid traffic, but, sure of their co-operation, might now boldly meditate, and gradually disclose, those lofty schemes which he had formed in his own bosom for the conquest of an empire.[11]

Harmony being thus restored, Cortés sent his heavy guns on board the fleet, and ordered it to coast along

honest Bernal Diaz, so often quoted. A hearty champion of the cause, he was by no means blind to the defects or the merits of his leader.

[11] This may appear rather indifferent logic to those who consider that Cortés appointed the very body who, in turn, appointed him to the command. But the affectation of legal forms afforded him a thin varnish for his proceedings, which served his purpose, for the present at least, with the troops. For the future, he trusted to his good star—in other words, to the success of his enterprise—to vindicate his conduct to the Emperor. He did not miscalculate.

the shore to the north as far as Chiahuitztla, the town near which the destined port of the new city was situated; proposing, himself, at the head of his troops, to visit Cempoalla, on the march. The road lay for some miles across the dreary plains in the neighborhood of the modern Vera Cruz. In this sandy waste no signs of vegetation met their eyes, which, however, were occasionally refreshed by glimpses of the blue Atlantic, and by the distant view of the magnificent Orizaba, towering, with his spotless diadem of snow, far above his colossal brethren of the Andes.[12] As they advanced, the country gradually assumed a greener and richer aspect. They crossed a river, probably a tributary of the *Rio de la Antigua*, with difficulty, on rafts, and on some broken canoes that were lying on the banks. They now came in view of very different scenery,—wide-rolling plains covered with a rich carpet of verdure and overshadowed by groves of cocoas and feathery palms, among whose tall, slender stems

[12] The name of the mountain is not given, and probably was not known, but the minute description in the MS. of Vera Cruz leaves no doubt that it was the one mentioned in the text. "Entre las quales así una que excede en mucha altura á todas las otras y de ella se vee y descubre gran parte de la mar y de la tierra, y es tan alta, que si el dia no es bien claro, no se puede divisar ni ver lo alto de ella, porque de la mitad arriba está toda cubierta de nubes: y algunos veces, cuando hace muy claro dia, se vee por cima de las dichas nubes lo alto de ella, y está tan blanco, que lo jusgamos por nieve." (Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.) This huge volcano was called *Citlaltepetl*, or "Star-Mountain," by the Mexicans,—perhaps from the fire which once issued from its conical summit, far above the clouds. It stands in the intendancy of Vera Cruz, and rises, according to Humboldt's measurement, to the enormous height of 17,368 feet above the ocean. (Essai politique, tom. i. p. 265.) It is the highest peak but one in the whole range of the Mexican Cordilleras.

were seen deer, and various wild animals with which the Spaniards were unacquainted. Some of the horsemen gave chase to the deer, and wounded, but did not succeed in killing them. They saw, also, pheasants and other birds; among them the wild turkey, the pride of the American forest, which the Spaniards described as a species of peacock.[13]

On their route they passed through some deserted villages, in which were Indian temples, where they found censers, and other sacred utensils, and manuscripts of the *agave* fibre, containing the picture-writing, in which, probably, their religious ceremonies were recorded. They now beheld, also, the hideous spectacle, with which they became afterwards familiar, of the mutilated corpses of victims who had been sacrificed to the accursed deities of the land. The Spaniards turned with loathing and indignation from a display of butchery which formed so dismal a contrast to the fair scenes of nature by which they were surrounded.

They held their course along the banks of the river, towards its source, when they were met by twelve Indians, sent by the cacique of Cempoalla to show them the way to his residence. At night they bivouacked in an open meadow, where they were well supplied with provisions by their new friends. They left the stream on the following morning, and, striking northerly across the country, came upon a wide expanse of luxuriant plains and woodland, glowing in all the splendor of tropical vegetation. The branches of the

[13] Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 44.

stately trees were gayly festooned with clustering vines of the dark-purple grape, variegated convolvuli, and other flowering parasites of the most brilliant dyes. The undergrowth of prickly aloe, matted with wild rose and honeysuckle, made in many places an almost impervious thicket. Amid this wilderness of sweet-smelling buds and blossoms fluttered numerous birds of the parrot tribe, and clouds of butterflies, whose gaudy colors, nowhere so gorgeous as in the *tierra caliente*, rivalled those of the vegetable creation; while birds of exquisite song, the scarlet cardinal, and the marvellous mocking-bird, that comprehends in his own notes the whole music of a forest, filled the air with delicious melody. The hearts of the stern Conquerors were not very sensible to the beauties of nature. But the magical charms of the scenery drew forth unbounded expressions of delight, and as they wandered through this "terrestrial paradise," as they called it, they fondly compared it to the fairest regions of their own sunny land.[14]

[14] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 32, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 5, cap. 1.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 1.—"Mui hermosas vegas y riberas tales y tan hermosas que en toda España no pueden ser mejores ansí de apaçibles á la vista como de fructíferas." (Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.) The following poetical apostrophe, by Lord Morpeth, to the scenery of Cuba, equally applicable to that of the *tierra caliente*, will give the reader a more animated picture of the glories of these sunny climes than my own prose can. The verses, which have never been published, breathe the generous sentiment characteristic of their noble author:

"Ye tropic forests of unfading green,
Where the palm tapers and the orange glows,
Where the light bamboo waves her feathery screen,
And her far shade the matchless *ceiba* throws!

As they approached the Indian city, they saw abundant signs of cultivation, in the trim gardens and orchards that lined both sides of the road. They were now met by parties of the natives, of either sex, who increased in numbers with every step of their progress. The women, as well as men, mingled fearlessly among the soldiers, bearing bunches and wreaths of flowers, with which they decorated the neck of the general's charger, and hung a chaplet of roses about his helmet. Flowers were the delight of this people. They bestowed much care in their cultivation, in which they were well seconded by a climate of alternate heat and moisture, stimulating the soil to the spontaneous production of every form of vegetable life. The same refined taste, as we shall see, prevailed among the warlike Aztecs, and has survived the degradation of the nation in their descendants of the present day.[15]

Many of the women appeared, from their richer dress and numerous attendants, to be persons of rank. They were clad in robes of fine cotton, curiously colored,

> "Ye cloudless ethers of unchanging blue,
> Save where the rosy streaks of eve give way
> To the clear sapphire of your midnight hue,
> The burnished azure of your perfect day!
>
> "Yet tell me not my native skies are bleak,
> That flushed with liquid wealth no cane-fields wave;
> For Virtue pines, and Manhood dares not speak,
> And Nature's glories brighten round the Slave."

[15] "The same love of flowers," observes one of the most delightful of modern travellers, "distinguishes the natives now, as in the times of Cortés. And it presents a strange anomaly," she adds, with her usual acuteness; "this love of flowers having existed along with their sanguinary worship and barbarous sacrifices." Madame Calderon de la Barca, Life in Mexico, vol. i. let. 12.

which reached from the neck—in the inferior orders, from the waist—to the ankles. The men wore a sort of mantle of the same material, *á la Morisca*, in the Moorish fashion, over their shoulders, and belts or sashes about the loins. Both sexes had jewels and ornaments of gold round their necks, while their ears and nostrils were perforated with rings of the same metal.

Just before reaching the town, some horsemen who had ridden in advance returned with the amazing intelligence "that they had been near enough to look within the gates, and found the houses all plated with burnished silver!" On entering the place, the silver was found to be nothing more than a brilliant coating of stucco, with which the principal buildings were covered; a circumstance which produced much merriment among the soldiers at the expense of their credulous comrades. Such ready credulity is a proof of the exalted state of their imaginations, which were prepared to see gold and silver in every object around them.[16] The edifices of the better kind were of stone and lime, or bricks dried in the sun; the poorer were of clay and earth. All were thatched with palm-leaves, which, though a flimsy roof, apparently, for such structures, were so nicely interwoven as to form a very effectual protection against the weather.

The city was said to contain from twenty to thirty thousand inhabitants. This is the most moderate computation, and not improbable.[17] Slowly and silently

[16] "Con la imaginacion que llevaban, i buenos deseos, todo se les antojaba plata i oro lo que relucia." Gomara, Crónica, cap. 32, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.

[17] This is Las Casas' estimate (Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 3, cap.

the little army paced the narrow and now crowded streets of Cempoalla, inspiring the natives with no greater wonder than they themselves experienced at the display of a policy and refinement so far superior to anything they had witnessed in the New World.[18] The cacique came out in front of his residence to receive them. He was a tall and very corpulent man, and advanced leaning on two of his attendants. He received Cortés and his followers with great courtesy, and, after a brief interchange of civilities, assigned the army its quarters in a neighboring temple, into the spacious court-yard of which a number of apartments opened, affording excellent accommodations for the soldiery.

Here the Spaniards were well supplied with provisions, meat cooked after the fashion of the country, and maize made into bread-cakes. The general received, also, a present of considerable value from the cacique, consisting of ornaments of gold and fine cottons. Notwithstanding these friendly demonstrations, Cortés did not relax his habitual vigilance, nor neglect any of the precautions of a good soldier. On his route, indeed, he had always marched in order of battle, well prepared against surprise. In his present quarters, he

121.) Torquemada hesitates between twenty, fifty, and one hundred and fifty thousand, each of which he names at different times! (Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. iii. p. 26, nota.) The place was gradually abandoned, after the Conquest, for others, in a more favorable position, probably, for trade. Its ruins were visible at the close of the last century. See Lorenzana, Hist. de Nueva-España, p. 39, nota.

[18] "Porque viven mas política y rasonablemente que ninguna de las gentes que hasta oy en estas partes se ha visto." Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.

stationed his sentinels with like care, posted his small artillery so as to command the entrance, and forbade any soldier to leave the camp without orders, under pain of death.[19]

The following morning, Cortés, accompanied by fifty of his men, paid a visit to the lord of Cempoalla in his own residence. It was a building of stone and lime, standing on a steep terrace of earth, and was reached by a flight of stone steps. It may have borne resemblance in its structure to some of the ancient buildings found in Central America. Cortés, leaving his soldiers in the court-yard, entered the mansion with one of his officers, and his fair interpreter, Doña Marina.[20] A long conference ensued, from which the Spanish general gathered much light respecting the state of the country. He first announced to the chief that he was the subject of a great monarch who dwelt beyond the waters; that he had come to the Aztec shores to abolish the inhuman worship which prevailed there, and to introduce the knowledge of the true God. The cacique replied that their gods, who sent them the sunshine and the rain, were good enough for them; that he was the tributary of a powerful monarch also, whose capital stood on a lake far off among the mountains,—a stern prince, merciless in his exactions, and, in case of resistance, or any offence, sure to wreak his vengeance by carrying off their young men and maidens to be sacrificed to his deities. Cortés assured

[19] Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 121.—Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 33, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 33, cap. 1.

[20] The courteous title of *doña* is usually given by the Spanish chroniclers to this accomplished Indian.

him that he would never consent to such enormities; he had been sent by his sovereign to redress abuses and to punish the oppressor;[21] and, if the Totonacs would be true to him, he would enable them to throw off the detested yoke of the Aztecs.

The cacique added that the Totonac territory contained about thirty towns and villages, which could muster a hundred thousand warriors,—a number much exaggerated.[22] There were other provinces of the empire, he said, where the Aztec rule was equally odious; and between him and the capital lay the warlike republic of Tlascala, which had always maintained its independence of Mexico. The fame of the Spaniards had gone before them, and he was well acquainted with their terrible victory at Tabasco. But still he looked with doubt and alarm to a rupture with "the great Montezuma," as he always styled him; whose armies, on the least provocation, would pour down from the mountain regions of the West, and, rushing over the plains like a whirlwind, sweep off the wretched people to slavery and sacrifice!

Cortés endeavored to reassure him, by declaring that a single Spaniard was stronger than a host of Aztecs. At the same time, it was desirable to know what nations would co-operate with him, not so much on his account as theirs, that he might distinguish friend from foe and

[21] "He had come only to redress injuries, to protect the captive, to succor the weak, and to overthrow tyranny." (Gomara, Crónica, cap. 33, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.) Are we reading the adventures—it is the language—of Don Quixote or Amadis de Gaula?

[22] Ibid., cap. 36.—Cortés, in his Second Letter to the Emperor Charles V., estimates the number of fighting-men at 50,000. Relacion segunda, ap. Lorenzana, p. 40.

know whom he was to spare in this war of extermination. Having raised the confidence of the admiring chief by this comfortable and politic vaunt, he took an affectionate leave, with the assurance that he would shortly return and concert measures for their future operations, when he had visited his ships in the adjoining port and secured a permanent settlement there.[23]

The intelligence gained by Cortés gave great satisfaction to his mind. It confirmed his former views, and showed, indeed, the interior of the monarchy to be in a state far more distracted than he had supposed. If he had before scarcely shrunk from attacking the Aztec empire, in the true spirit of a knight-errant, with his single arm, as it were, what had he now to fear, when one half of the nation could be thus marshalled against the other? In the excitement of the moment, his sanguine spirit kindled with an enthusiasm which overleaped every obstacle. He communicated his own feelings to the officers about him, and, before a blow was struck, they already felt as if the banners of Spain were waving in triumph from the towers of Montezuma! But many a bloody field was to be fought, many a peril and privation to be encountered, before that consummation could be attained.

Taking leave of the hospitable Indian, on the following day the Spaniards took the road to Chiahuitztla,[24]

[23] Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 121.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 81.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 33, cap. 1.

[24] The historian, with the aid of Clavigero, himself a Mexican, may rectify frequent blunders of former writers, in the orthography of Aztec

about four leagues distant, near which was the port discovered by Montejo, where their ships were now riding at anchor. They were provided by the cacique with four hundred Indian porters, *tamanes*, as they were called, to transport the baggage. These men easily carried fifty pounds' weight five or six leagues in a day. They were in use all over the Mexican empire, and the Spaniards found them of great service, henceforth, in relieving the troops from this part of their duty. They passed through a country of the same rich, voluptuous character as that which they had lately traversed, and arrived early next morning at the Indian town, perched like a fortress on a bold, rocky eminence that commanded the Gulf. Most of the inhabitants had fled, but fifteen of the principal men remained, who received them in a friendly manner, offering the usual compliments of flowers and incense. The people of the place, losing their fears, gradually returned. While conversing with the chiefs, the Spaniards were joined by the worthy cacique of Cempoalla, borne by his men on a litter. He eagerly took part in their deliberations. The intelligence gained here by Cortés confirmed the accounts already gathered of the feelings and resources of the Totonac nation.

In the midst of their conference, they were interrupted by a movement among the people, and soon afterwards five men entered the great square or market-place, where they were standing. By their lofty port, their peculiar and much richer dress, they seemed not

names. Both Robertson and Solís spell the name of this place *Quiabislan*. Blunders in such a barbarous nomenclature must be admitted to be very pardonable.

to be of the same race as these Indians. Their dark, glossy hair was tied in a knot on the top of the head. They had bunches of flowers in their hands, and were followed by several attendants, some bearing wands with cords, others fans, with which they brushed away the flies and insects from their lordly masters. As these persons passed through the place, they cast a haughty look on the Spaniards, scarcely deigning to return their salutations. They were immediately joined, in great confusion, by the Totonac chiefs, who seemed anxious to conciliate them by every kind of attention.

The general, much astonished, inquired of Marina what it meant. She informed him they were Aztec nobles, empowered to receive the tribute for Montezuma. Soon after, the chiefs returned with dismay painted on their faces. They confirmed Marina's statement, adding that the Aztecs greatly resented the entertainment afforded the Spaniards without the Emperor's permission, and demanded in expiation twenty young men and women for sacrifice to the gods. Cortés showed the strongest indignation at this insolence. He required the Totonacs not only to refuse the demand, but to arrest the persons of the collectors and throw them into prison. The chiefs hesitated, but he insisted on it so peremptorily that they at length complied, and the Aztecs were seized, bound hand and foot, and placed under a guard.

In the night, the Spanish general procured the escape of two of them, and had them brought secretly before him. He expressed his regret at the indignity they had experienced from the Totonacs; told them he would provide means for their flight, and to-morrow

would endeavor to obtain the release of their companions. He desired them to report this to their master, with assurances of the great regard the Spaniards entertained for him, notwithstanding his ungenerous behavior in leaving them to perish from want on his barren shores. He then sent the Mexican nobles down to the port, whence they were carried to another part of the coast by water, for fear of the violence of the Totonacs. These were greatly incensed at the escape of the prisoners, and would have sacrificed the remainder at once, but for the Spanish commander, who evinced the utmost horror at the proposal, and ordered them to be sent for safe custody on board the fleet. Soon after, they were permitted to join their companions. This artful proceeding, so characteristic of the policy of Cortés, had, as we shall see hereafter, all the effect intended on Montezuma. It cannot be commended, certainly, as in the true spirit of chivalry. Yet it has not wanted its panegyrist among the national historians![85]

By order of Cortés, messengers were despatched to the Totonac towns to report what had been done, calling on them to refuse the payment of further tribute to Montezuma. But there was no need of messengers. The affrighted attendants of the Aztec lords had fled in every direction, bearing the tidings, which spread like wildfire through the country, of the daring insult offered to the majesty of Mexico. The astonished Indians, cheered with the sweet hope of regaining their

[85] "Grande artífice," exclaims Solís, "de medir lo que disponia con lo que recelaba; y prudente capitan él que sabe caminar en alcance de las contingencias"! Conquista, lib. 2, cap. 9.

ancient liberty, came in numbers to Chiahuitztla, to see and confer with the formidable strangers. The more timid, dismayed at the thought of encountering the power of Montezuma, recommended an embassy to avert his displeasure by timely concessions. But the dexterous management of Cortés had committed them too far to allow any reasonable expectation of indulgence from this quarter. After some hesitation, therefore, it was determined to embrace the protection of the Spaniards, and to make one bold effort for the recovery of freedom. Oaths of allegiance were taken by the chiefs to the Spanish sovereigns, and duly recorded by Godoy, the royal notary. Cortés, satisfied with the important acquisition of so many vassals to the crown, set out soon after for the destined port, having first promised to revisit Cempoalla, where his business was but partially accomplished.[26]

The spot selected for the new city was only half a league distant, in a wide and fruitful plain, affording a tolerable haven for the shipping. Cortés was not long in determining the circuit of the walls, and the sites of the fort, granary, town-house, temple, and other public buildings. The friendly Indians eagerly assisted, by bringing materials, stone, lime, wood, and bricks dried in the sun. Every man put his hand to the work. The general labored with the meanest of the soldiers, stimulating their exertions by his example as well as voice. In a few weeks the task was accom-

[26] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 81.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 40.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 34–36, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.—Bernal Diaz, Conquista, cap. 46, 47.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 5, cap. 10, 11.

plished, and a town rose up, which, if not quite worthy of the aspiring name it bore, answered most of the purposes for which it was intended. It served as a good *point d'appui* for future operations; a place of retreat for the disabled, as well as for the army in case of reverses; a magazine for stores, and for such articles as might be received from or sent to the mother-country; a port for the shipping; a position of sufficient strength to overawe the adjacent country.[27]

It was the first colony—the fruitful parent of so many others—in New Spain. It was hailed with satisfaction by the simple natives, who hoped to repose in safety under its protecting shadow. Alas! they could not read the future, or they would have found no cause to rejoice in this harbinger of a revolution more tremendous than any predicted by their bards and prophets. It was not the good Quetzalcoatl who had returned to claim his own again, bringing peace, freedom, and civilization in his train. Their fetters, indeed, would be broken, and their wrongs be amply avenged on the

[27] Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Bernal Diaz, Conquista, cap. 48.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 1.—Declaracion de Montejo, MS.—Notwithstanding the advantages of its situation, La Villa Rica was abandoned in a few years for a neighboring position to the south, not far from the mouth of the Antigua. This second settlement was known by the name of *Vera Cruz Vieja*, "Old Vera Cruz." Early in the seventeenth century this place, also, was abandoned for the present city, *Nueva Vera Cruz*, or New Vera Cruz, as it is called. (See *ante*, chap. 5, note 8.) Of the true cause of these successive migrations we are ignorant. If, as is pretended, it was on account of the *vómito*, the inhabitants, one would suppose, can have gained little by the exchange. (See Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 210.) A want of attention to these changes has led to much confusion and inaccuracy in the ancient maps. Lorenzana has not escaped them in his chart and topographical account of the route of Cortés.

proud head of the Aztec. But it was to be by that strong arm which should bow down equally the oppressor and the oppressed. The light of civilization would be poured on their land. But it would be the light of a consuming fire, before which their barbaric glory, their institutions, their very existence and name as a nation, would wither and become extinct! Their doom was sealed when the white man had set his foot on their soil.

CHAPTER VIII.

ANOTHER AZTEC EMBASSY. — DESTRUCTION OF THE IDOLS.—DESPATCHES SENT TO SPAIN.—CONSPIRACY IN THE CAMP.—THE FLEET SUNK.

1519.

WHILE the Spaniards were occupied with their new settlement, they were surprised by the presence of an embassy from Mexico. The account of the imprisonment of the royal collectors had spread rapidly through the country. When it reached the capital, all were filled with amazement at the unprecedented daring of the strangers. In Montezuma every other feeling, even that of fear, was swallowed up in indignation; and he showed his wonted energy in the vigorous preparations which he instantly made to punish his rebellious vassals and to avenge the insult offered to the majesty of the empire. But when the Aztec officers liberated by Cortés reached the capital and reported the courteous treatment they had received from the Spanish commander, Montezuma's anger was mitigated, and his superstitious fears, getting the ascendency again, induced him to resume his former timid and conciliatory policy. He accordingly sent an embassy, consisting of two youths, his nephews, and four of the ancient nobles of his court, to the Spanish quar-

ters. He provided them, in his usual munificent spirit, with a princely donation of gold, rich cotton stuffs, and beautiful mantles of the *plumaje*, or feather embroidery. The envoys, on coming before Cortés, presented him with the articles, at the same time offering the acknowledgments of their master for the courtesy he had shown in liberating his captive nobles. He was surprised and afflicted, however, that the Spaniards should have countenanced his faithless vassals in their rebellion. He had no doubt they were the strangers whose arrival had been so long announced by the oracles, and of the same lineage with himself.[1] From deference to them he would spare the Totonacs, while they were present. But the time for vengeance would come.

Cortés entertained the Indian chieftains with frank hospitality. At the same time, he took care to make such a display of his resources as, while it amused their minds, should leave a deep impression of his power. He then, after a few trifling gifts, dismissed them with a conciliatory message to their master, and the assurance that he should soon pay his respects to him in his capital, where all misunderstanding between them would be readily adjusted.

The Totonac allies could scarcely credit their senses, when they gathered the nature of this interview. Notwithstanding the presence of the Spaniards, they had looked with apprehension to the consequences of their

[1] "Teniendo respeto á que tiene por cierto, que somos los que sus antepassados les auian dicho, que auian de venir á sus tierras, é que deuemos de ser de sus linajes." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 48.

rash act; and their feelings of admiration were heightened into awe for the strangers who, at this distance, could exercise so mysterious an influence over the terrible Montezuma.[2]

Not long after, the Spaniards received an application from the cacique of Cempoalla to aid him in a dispute in which he was engaged with a neighboring city. Cortés marched with a part of his forces to his support. On the route, one Morla, a common soldier, robbed a native of a couple of fowls. Cortés, indignant at this violation of his orders before his face, and aware of the importance of maintaining a reputation for good faith with his allies, commanded the man to be hung up, at once, by the roadside, in face of the whole army. Fortunately for the poor wretch, Pedro de Alvarado, the future conqueror of Quiché, was present, and ventured to cut down the body, while there was yet life in it. He, probably, thought enough had been done for example, and the loss of a single life, unnecessarily, was more than the little band could afford. The anecdote is characteristic, as showing the strict discipline maintained by Cortés over his men, and the freedom assumed by his captains, who regarded him on terms nearly of equality,—as a fellow-adventurer with themselves. This feeling of companionship led to a spirit of insubordination among them, which made his own post as commander the more delicate and difficult.

On reaching the hostile city, but a few leagues from the coast, they were received in an amicable manner; and Cortés, who was accompanied by his allies, had

[2] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 37.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 82.

the satisfaction of reconciling these different branches of the Totonac family with each other, without bloodshed. He then returned to Cempoalla, where he was welcomed with joy by the people, who were now impressed with as favorable an opinion of his moderation and justice as they had before been of his valor. In token of his gratitude, the Indian cacique delivered to the general eight Indian maidens, richly dressed, wearing collars and ornaments of gold, with a number of female slaves to wait on them. They were daughters of the principal chiefs, and the cacique requested that the Spanish captains might take them as their wives. Cortés received the damsels courteously, but told the cacique they must first be baptized, as the sons of the Church could have no commerce with idolaters.[3] He then declared that it was a great object of his mission to wean the natives from their heathenish abominations, and besought the Totonac lord to allow his idols to be cast down, and the symbols of the true faith to be erected in their place.

To this the other answered, as before, that his gods were good enough for him; nor could all the persuasion of the general, nor the preaching of Father Olmedo, induce him to acquiesce. Mingled with his polytheism, he had conceptions of a Supreme and Infinite Being, Creator of the Universe, and his darkened understanding could not comprehend how such a Being could condescend to take the form of humanity, with

[3] "De buena gana recibirian las Doncellas como fuesen Christianas; porque de otra manera, no era permitido á hombres, hijos de la Iglesia de Dios, tener comercio con idólatras." Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 5, cap. 13.

its infirmities and ills, and wander about on earth, the voluntary victim of persecution from the hands of those whom his breath had called into existence.[4] He plainly told the Spaniards that he would resist any violence offered to his gods, who would, indeed, avenge the act themselves, by the instant destruction of their enemies.

But the zeal of the Christians had mounted too high to be cooled by remonstrance or menace. During their residence in the land, they had witnessed more than once the barbarous rites of the natives, their cruel sacrifices of human victims, and their disgusting cannibal repasts.[5] Their souls sickened at these abominations, and they agreed with one voice to stand by their general, when he told them that "Heaven would never smile on their enterprise if they countenanced such atrocities, and that, for his own part, he was resolved the Indian idols should be demolished that very hour, if it cost him his life." To postpone the work of conversion was a sin. In the enthusiasm of the moment,

4 Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 5, cap. 13.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 122.—Herrera has put a very edifying harangue, on this occasion, into the mouth of Cortés, which savors much more of the priest than the soldier. Does he not confound him with Father Olmedo?

5 "Esto habemos visto," says the Letter of Vera Cruz, "algunos de nosotros, y los que lo han visto dizen que es la mas terrible y la mas espantosa cosa de ver que jamas han visto." Still more strongly speaks Bernal Diaz. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 51.) The Letter computes that there were fifty or sixty persons thus butchered in each of the *teocallis* every year; giving an annual consumption, in the countries which the Spaniards had then visited, of three or four thousand victims! (Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.) However loose this arithmetic may be, the general fact is appalling.

the dictates of policy and ordinary prudence were alike unheeded.

Scarcely waiting for his commands, the Spaniards moved towards one of the principal *teocallis*, or temples, which rose high on a pyramidal foundation, with a steep ascent of stone steps in the middle. The cacique, divining their purpose, instantly called his men to arms. The Indian warriors gathered from all quarters, with shrill cries and clashing of weapons; while the priests, in their dark cotton robes, with dishevelled tresses matted with blood, flowing wildly over their shoulders, rushed frantic among the natives, calling on them to protect their gods from violation! All was now confusion, tumult, and warlike menace, where so lately had been peace and the sweet brotherhood of nations.

Cortés took his usual prompt and decided measures. He caused the cacique and some of the principal inhabitants and priests to be arrested by his soldiers. He then commanded them to quiet the people, for, if an arrow was shot against a Spaniard, it should cost every one of them his life. Marina, at the same time, represented the madness of resistance, and reminded the cacique that if he now alienated the affections of the Spaniards he would be left without a protector against the terrible vengeance of Montezuma. These temporal considerations seem to have had more weight with the Totonac chieftain than those of a more spiritual nature. He covered his face with his hands, exclaiming that the gods would avenge their own wrongs.

The Christians were not slow in availing themselves of his tacit acquiescence. Fifty soldiers, at a signal

from their general, sprang up the great stairway of the temple, entered the building on the summit, the walls of which were black with human gore, tore the huge wooden idols from their foundations, and dragged them to the edge of the terrace. Their fantastic forms and features, conveying a symbolic meaning, which was lost on the Spaniards, seemed in their eyes only the hideous lineaments of Satan. With great alacrity they rolled the colossal monsters down the steps of the pyramid, amidst the triumphant shouts of their own companions, and the groans and lamentations of the natives. They then consummated the whole by burning them in the presence of the assembled multitude.

The same effect followed as in Cozumel. The Totonacs, finding their deities incapable of preventing or even punishing this profanation of their shrines, conceived a mean opinion of their power, compared with that of the mysterious and formidable strangers. The floor and walls of the *teocalli* were then cleansed, by command of Cortés, from their foul impurities; a fresh coating of stucco was laid on them by the Indian masons; and an altar was raised, surmounted by a lofty cross, and hung with garlands of roses. A procession was next formed, in which some of the principal Totonac priests, exchanging their dark mantles for robes of white, carried lighted candles in their hands; while an image of the Virgin, half smothered under the weight of flowers, was borne aloft, and, as the procession climbed the steps of the temple, was deposited above the altar. Mass was performed by Father Olmedo, and the impressive character of the ceremony and the passionate eloquence of the good priest touched

the feelings of the motley audience, until Indians as well as Spaniards, if we may trust the chronicler, were melted into tears and audible sobs. The Protestant missionary seeks to enlighten the understanding of his convert by the pale light of reason. But the bolder Catholic, kindling the spirit by the splendor of the spectacle and by the glowing portrait of an agonized Redeemer, sweeps along his hearers in a tempest of passion, that drowns everything like reflection. He has secured his convert, however, by the hold on his affections,—an easier and more powerful hold, with the untutored savage, than reason.

An old soldier named Juan de Torres, disabled by bodily infirmity, consented to remain and watch over the sanctuary and instruct the natives in its services. Cortés then, embracing his Totonac allies, now brothers in religion as in arms, set out once more for the Villa Rica, where he had some arrangements to complete previous to his departure for the capital.[6]

He was surprised to find that a Spanish vessel had arrived there in his absence, having on board twelve soldiers and two horses. It was under the command of a captain named Saucedo, a cavalier of the ocean, who had followed in the track of Cortés in quest of adventure. Though a small, they afforded a very seasonable body of recruits for the little army. By these men, the Spaniards were informed that Velasquez, the governor of Cuba, had lately received a warrant from

[6] Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 122.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 51, 52.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 43.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 5, cap. 13, 14.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83.

the Spanish government to establish a colony in the newly-discovered countries.

Cortés now resolved to put a plan in execution which he had been some time meditating. He knew that all the late acts of the colony, as well as his own authority, would fall to the ground without the royal sanction. He knew, too, that the interest of Velasquez, which was great at court, would, so soon as he was acquainted with his secession, be wholly employed to circumvent and crush him. He resolved to anticipate his movements, and to send a vessel to Spain with despatches addressed to the emperor himself, announcing the nature and extent of his discoveries, and to obtain, if possible, the confirmation of his proceedings. In order to conciliate his master's good will, he further proposed to send him such a present as should suggest lofty ideas of the importance of his own services to the crown. To effect this, the royal fifth he considered inadequate. He conferred with his officers, and persuaded them to relinquish their share of the treasure. At his instance, they made a similar application to the soldiers; representing that it was the earnest wish of the general, who set the example by resigning his own fifth, equal to the share of the crown. It was but little that each man was asked to surrender, but the whole would make a present worthy of the monarch for whom it was intended. By this sacrifice they might hope to secure his indulgence for the past and his favor for the future; a temporary sacrifice, that would be well repaid by the security of the rich possessions which awaited them in Mexico. A paper was then circulated among the soldiers, which all who were dis-

posed to relinquish their shares were requested to sign. Those who declined should have their claims respected, and receive the amount due to them. No one refused to sign; thus furnishing another example of the extraordinary power obtained by Cortés over these rapacious spirits, who, at his call, surrendered up the very treasures which had been the great object of their hazardous enterprise![7]

7 Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 53.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 82.—Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.

A complete inventory of the articles received from Montezuma is contained in the *Carta de Vera Cruz*.—The following are a few of the items.

Two collars made of gold and precious stones.

A hundred ounces of gold ore, that their Highnesses might see in what state the gold came from the mines.

Two birds made of green feathers, with feet, beaks, and eyes of gold,—and, in the same piece with them, animals of gold, resembling snails.

A large alligator's head of gold.

A bird of green feathers, with feet, beak, and eyes of gold.

Two birds made of thread and feather-work, having the quills of their wings and tails, their feet, eyes, and the ends of their beaks, of gold,—standing upon two reeds covered with gold, which are raised on balls of feather-work and gold embroidery, one white and the other yellow, with seven tassels of feather-work hanging from each of them.

A large silver wheel weighing forty-eight marks, several bracelets and leaves of the same metal, together with five smaller shields, the whole weighing sixty-two marks of silver.

A box of feather-work embroidered on leather, with a large plate of gold, weighing seventy ounces, in the midst.

Two pieces of cloth woven with feathers; another with variegated colors; and another worked with black and white figures.

A large wheel of gold, with figures of strange animals on it, and worked with tufts of leaves; weighing three thousand eight hundred ounces.

He accompanied this present with a letter to the emperor, in which he gave a full account of all that had befallen him since his departure from Cuba; of his various discoveries, battles, and traffic with the natives; their conversion to Christianity; his strange perils and sufferings; many particulars respecting the lands he had visited, and such as he could collect in regard to the great Mexican monarchy and its sovereign. He stated his difficulties with the governor of Cuba, the proceedings of the army in reference to colonization, and besought the emperor to confirm their acts, as well as his own authority, expressing his entire confidence that he should be able, with the aid of his brave followers, to place the Castilian crown in possession of this great Indian empire.[8]

This was the celebrated *First Letter,* as it is called, of Cortés, which has hitherto eluded every search that has been made for it in the libraries of Europe.[9] Its

A fan of variegated feather-work, with thirty-seven rods plated with gold.

Five fans of variegated feathers,—four of which have ten, and the other thirteen, rods embossed with gold.

Sixteen shields of precious stones, with feathers of various colors hanging from their rims.

Two pieces of cotton very richly wrought with black and white embroidery.

Six shields, each covered with a plate of gold, with something resembling a golden mitre in the centre.

[8] "Una muy larga Carta," says Gomara, in his loose analysis of it. Crónica, cap. 40.

[9] Dr. Robertson states that the Imperial Library at Vienna was examined for this document, at his instance, but without success. (History of America, vol. ii. note 70.) I have not been more fortunate in the researches made for me in the British Museum, the Royal Library of Paris, and that of the Academy of History at Madrid.

existence is fully established by references to it, both in his own subsequent letters, and in the writings of contemporaries.[10] Its general purport is given by his

The last is a great depository for the colonial historical documents; but a very thorough inspection of its papers makes it certain that this is wanting to the collection. As the emperor received it on the eve of his embarkation for Germany, and the Letter of Vera Cruz, forwarded at the same time, is in the library of Vienna, this would seem, after all, to be the most probable place of its retreat.

[10] "By a ship," says Cortés, in the very first sentence of his Second Letter to the emperor, "which I despatched from this your sacred majesty's province of New Spain on the 16th of July of the year 1519, I sent your highness a very long and particular relation of what had happened from my coming hither up to that time." (Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 38.) "Cortés wrote," says Bernal Diaz, "as he informed us, an accurate report, but we did not see his letter." (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 53.) (Also, Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 1, and Gomara, ut supra.) Were it not for these positive testimonies, one might suppose that the Carta de Vera Cruz had suggested an *imaginary* letter of Cortés. Indeed, the copy of the former document belonging to the Spanish Academy of History—and perhaps the original at Vienna—bears the erroneous title of "Primera Relacion de Cortés."*

* [There can be little doubt that the "Letter of Vera Cruz" is the document referred to by Cortés, writing in October, 1520, as the "muy larga y particular Relacion" which he had "despatched" to the emperor in the summer of the preceding year. This language would not necessarily imply that the letter so described bore his own signature, while it was a natural mode of designating one of which he was the real author. It is easy to understand why, holding as yet no direct commission from the crown, he should have been less solicitous to appear as the narrator of his own exploits than to give them an appearance of official sanction and cover up his irregularity in not addressing his report to Velasquez, the official superior from whose control he was seeking to emancipate himself. Nor is it necessary, in accepting this hypothesis, to reject the statement of Bernal Diaz that Cortés sent to the emperor a relation under his own hand which he did not show to his companions. It seems to have been his habit on sub-

chaplain, Gomara. The importance of the document has doubtless been much overrated; and, should it ever come to light, it will probably be found to add little of interest to the matter contained in the letter from Vera Cruz, which has formed the basis of the preceding portion of our narrative. Cortés had no sources of information beyond those open to the authors of the latter document. He was even less full and frank in his communications, if it be true that he suppressed all notice of the discoveries of his two immediate predecessors.[11]

The magistrates of the Villa Rica, in their epistle, went over the same ground with Cortés; concluding with an emphatic representation of the misconduct of Velasquez, whose venality, extortion, and selfish devotion to his personal interests, to the exclusion of those of his sovereigns as well as of his own followers, they placed in a most clear and unenviable light.[12]

[11] This is the imputation of Bernal Diaz, reported on hearsay, as he admits he never saw the letter himself. Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 54.

[12] "Fingiendo mill cautelas," says Las Casas, politely, of this part of the letter, "y afirmando otras muchas falsedades é mentiras"! Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 122.

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sequent occasions, when sending a detailed report, to accompany it with a briefer and more private letter, giving a summary of what was contained in the longer document, sometimes with the addition of other matter, to be read by the emperor himself. One such letter, cited hereafter (vol. iii. p. 266, note), mentions "una relacion bien larga y particular," which he was sending under the same date. That letters of this kind should not always have been preserved can excite no surprise; but it is highly improbable that the same fate should have befallen a full official report, the first of a series otherwise complete and disseminated by means of copies.—ED.]

They implored the government not to sanction his interference with the new colony, which would be fatal to its welfare, but to commit the undertaking to Hernando Cortés, as the man most capable, by his experience and conduct, of bringing it to a glorious termination.[13]

With this letter went also another in the name of the citizen-soldiers of Villa Rica, tendering their dutiful submission to the sovereigns, and requesting the confirmation of their proceedings, above all, that of Cortés as their general.

The selection of the agents for the mission was a delicate matter, as on the result might depend the future fortunes of the colony and its commander.

[13] This document is of the greatest value and interest, coming as it does from the best-instructed persons in the camp. It presents an elaborate record of all then known of the countries they had visited, and of the principal movements of the army, to the time of the foundation of the Villa Rica. The writers conciliate our confidence by the circumspect tone of their narration. "Querer dar," they say, "á Vuestra Magestad todas las particularidades de esta tierra y gente de ella, podria ser que en algo se errase la relacion, porque muchas de ellas no se han visto mas de por informaciones de los naturales de ella, y por esto no nos entremetemos á dar mas de aquello que por muy cierto y verdadero Vras. Reales Altezas podrán mandar tener." The account given of Velasquez, however, must be considered as an *ex parte* testimony, and, as such, admitted with great reserve. It was essential to their own vindication, to vindicate Cortés. The letter has never been printed. The original exists, as above stated, in the Imperial Library at Vienna. The copy in my possession, covering more than sixty pages folio, is taken from that of the Academy of History at Madrid.*

* [The letter has since been printed, from the original at Vienna, in the Col. de Doc. inéd. para la Hist. de España, tom. i.—ED.]

Cortés intrusted the affair to two cavaliers on whom he could rely; Francisco de Montejo, the ancient partisan of Velasquez, and Alonso Hernandez de Puertocarrero. The latter officer was a near kinsman of the count of Medellin, and it was hoped his high connections might secure a favorable influence at court.

Together with the treasure, which seemed to verify the assertion that "the land teemed with gold as abundantly as that whence Solomon drew the same precious metal for his temple,"[14] several Indian manuscripts were sent. Some were of cotton, others of the Mexican *agave*. Their unintelligible characters, says a chronicler, excited little interest in the Conquerors. As evidence of intellectual culture, however, they formed higher objects of interest to a philosophic mind than those costly fabrics which attested only the mechanical ingenuity of the nation.[15] Four Indian slaves were added as specimens of the natives. They had been rescued from the cages in which they were confined for sacrifice. One of the best vessels of the fleet was selected for the voyage, manned by fifteen seamen, and placed under the direction of the pilot Alaminos. He was directed to hold his course through the Bahama channel, north of Cuba, or Fernandina, as it was then called, and on no account to touch at that island, or any other in the Indian Ocean. With these instruc-

[14] "Á nuestra parecer se debe creer, que ai en esta tierra tanto quanto en aquella de donde se dize aver llevado Salomon el oro para el templo." Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.

[15] Peter Martyr, pre-eminent above his contemporaries for the enlightened views he took of the new discoveries, devotes half a chapter to the Indian manuscripts, in which he recognized the evidence of a civilization analogous to the Egyptian. De Orbe Novo, dec. 4, cap. 8.

tions, the good ship took its departure on the 26th of July, freighted with the treasures and the good wishes of the community of the Villa Rica de Vera Cruz.

After a quick run the emissaries made the island of Cuba, and, in direct disregard of orders, anchored before Marien, on the northern side of the island. This was done to accommodate Montejo, who wished to visit a plantation owned by him in the neighborhood. While off the port, a sailor got on shore, and, crossing the island to St. Jago, the capital, spread everywhere tidings of the expedition, until they reached the ears of Velasquez. It was the first intelligence which had been received of the armament since its departure; and, as the governor listened to the recital, it would not be easy to paint the mingled emotions of curiosity, astonishment, and wrath which agitated his bosom. In the first sally of passion, he poured a storm of invective on the heads of his secretary and treasurer, the friends of Cortés, who had recommended him as the leader of the expedition. After somewhat relieving himself in this way, he despatched two fast-sailing vessels to Marien with orders to seize the rebel ship, and, in case of her departure, to follow and overtake her.

But before the ships could reach that port the bird had flown, and was far on her way across the broad Atlantic. Stung with mortification at this fresh disappointment, Velasquez wrote letters of indignant complaint to the government at home, and to the Hieronymite fathers in Hispaniola, demanding redress. He obtained little satisfaction from the latter. He resolved, however, to take the matter into his own hands, and

set about making formidable preparations for another squadron, which should be more than a match for that under his rebellious officer. He was indefatigable in his exertions, visiting every part of the island, and straining all his resources to effect his purpose. The preparations were on a scale that necessarily consumed many months.

Meanwhile the little vessel was speeding her prosperous way across the waters, and, after touching at one of the Azores, came safely into the harbor of St. Lucar, in the month of October. However long it may appear in the more perfect nautical science of our day, it was reckoned a fair voyage for that. Of what befell the commissioners on their arrival, their reception at court, and the sensation caused by their intelligence, I defer the account to a future chapter.[16]

Shortly after the departure of the commissioners, an affair occurred of a most unpleasant nature. A number of persons, with the priest Juan Diaz at their head, ill-affected, from some cause or other, towards the administration of Cortés, or not relishing the hazardous expedition before them, laid a plan to seize one of the vessels, make the best of their way to Cuba, and report to the governor the fate of the armament. It was conducted with so much secrecy that the party had got their provisions, water, and everything necessary for the voyage, on board, without detection; when the

[16] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 54–57.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 40.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 5, cap. 14.—Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Martyr's copious information was chiefly derived from his conversations with Alaminos and the two envoys, on their arrival at court. De Orbe Novo, dec. 4, cap. 6, et alibi; also Idem, Opus Epistolarum (Amstelodami, 1670), ep. 650.

conspiracy was betrayed, on the very night they were to sail, by one of their own number, who repented the part he had taken in it. The general caused the persons implicated to be instantly apprehended. An examination was instituted. The guilt of the parties was placed beyond a doubt. Sentence of death was passed on two of the ringleaders; another, the pilot, was condemned to lose his feet, and several others to be whipped. The priest, probably the most guilty of the whole, claiming the usual benefit of clergy, was permitted to escape. One of those condemned to the gallows was named Escudero, the very alguacil who, the reader may remember, so stealthily apprehended Cortés before the sanctuary in Cuba.[17] The general, on signing the death-warrants, was heard to exclaim, "Would that I had never learned to write!" It was not the first time, it was remarked, that the exclamation had been uttered in similar circumstances.[18]

The arrangements being now finally settled at the Villa Rica, Cortés sent forward Alvarado, with a large part of the army, to Cempoalla, where he soon after joined them with the remainder. The late affair of the conspiracy seems to have made a deep impression on his mind. It showed him that there were timid spirits in the camp on whom he could not rely, and

[17] See *ante*, p. 239.

[18] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 57.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 2.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 122.—Demanda de Narvaez, MS.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 41.—It was the exclamation of Nero, as reported by Suetonius. "Et cum de supplicio cujusdam capite damnati ut ex more subscriberet, admoneretur, 'Quam vellem,' inquit, 'nescire literas!'" Lib. 6, cap. 10.

who, he feared, might spread the seeds of disaffection among their companions. Even the more resolute, on any occasion of disgust or disappointment hereafter, might falter in purpose, and, getting possession of the vessels, abandon the enterprise. This was already too vast, and the odds were too formidable, to authorize expectation of success with diminution of numbers. Experience showed that this was always to be apprehended while means of escape were at hand.[19] The best chance for success was to cut off these means. He came to the daring resolution to destroy the fleet, without the knowledge of his army.

When arrived at Cempoalla, he communicated his design to a few of his devoted adherents, who entered warmly into his views. Through them he readily persuaded the pilots, by means of those golden arguments which weigh more than any other with ordinary minds, to make such a report of the condition of the fleet as suited his purpose. The ships, they said, were grievously racked by the heavy gales they had encountered, and, what was worse, the worms had eaten into their sides and bottoms until most of them were not seaworthy, and some, indeed, could scarcely now be kept afloat.

Cortés received the communication with surprise; "for he could well dissemble," observes Las Casas,

[19] "Y porque," says Cortés, "demas de los que por ser criados y amigos de Diego Velasquez tenian voluntad de salir de la Tierra, habia otros, que por verla tan grande, y de tanta gente, y tal, y ver los pocos Españoles que eramos, estaban del mismo propósito; creyendo, que si allí los navíos dejasse, se me alzarian con ellos, y yéndose todos los que de esta voluntad estavan, yo quedaria casi solo."

with his usual friendly comment, "when it suited his interests." "If it be so," he exclaimed, "we must make the best of it! Heaven's will be done!"[20] He then ordered five of the worst conditioned to be dismantled, their cordage, sails, iron, and whatever was movable, to be brought on shore, and the ships to be sunk. A survey was made of the others, and, on a similar report, four more were condemned in the same manner. Only one small vessel remained!

When the intelligence reached the troops in Cempoalla, it caused the deepest consternation. They saw themselves cut off by a single blow from friends, family, country! The stoutest hearts quailed before the prospect of being thus abandoned on a hostile shore, a handful of men arrayed against a formidable empire. When the news arrived of the destruction of the five vessels first condemned, they had acquiesced in it as a necessary measure, knowing the mischievous activity of the insects in these tropical seas. But, when this was followed by the loss of the remaining four, suspicions of the truth flashed on their minds. They felt they were betrayed. Murmurs, at first deep, swelled louder and louder, menacing open mutiny. "Their general," they said, "had led them like cattle to be butchered in the shambles!"[21] The affair wore a most

[20] "Mostró quando se lo dixéron mucho sentimiento Cortés, porque savia bien haçer fingimientos quando le era provechoso, y rrespondióles que mirasen vien en ello, é que si no estavan para navegar que diesen gracias á Dios por ello, pues no se podia hacer mas." Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 122.

[21] "Decian, que los queria meter en el matadero." Gomara, Crónica, cap. 42.

alarming aspect. In no situation was Cortés ever exposed to greater danger from his soldiers.[22]

His presence of mind did not desert him at this crisis. He called his men together, and, employing the tones of persuasion rather than authority, assured them that a survey of the ships showed they were not fit for service. If he had ordered them to be destroyed, they should consider, also, that his was the greatest sacrifice, for they were his property,—all, indeed, he possessed in the world. The troops, on the other hand, would derive one great advantage from it, by the addition of a hundred able-bodied recruits, before required to man the vessels. But, even if the fleet had been saved, it could have been of little service in their present expedition; since they would not need it if they succeeded, while they would be too far in the interior to profit by it if they failed. He besought them to turn their thoughts in another direction. To be thus calculating chances and means of escape was unworthy of brave souls. They had set their hands to the work; to look back, as they advanced, would be their ruin. They had only to resume their former confidence in themselves and their general, and success was certain. "As for me," he concluded, "I have chosen my part. I will remain here, while there is one to bear me company. If there be any so craven as to shrink from sharing the dangers of our glorious enterprise, let them go home, in God's name.

[22] "Al cavo lo ovieron de sentir la gente y ayna se le amotinaran muchos, y esta fué uno de los peligros que pasaron por Cortés de muchos que para matallo de los mismos Españoles estuvo." Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 122.

There is still one vessel left. Let them take that and return to Cuba. They can tell there how they deserted their commander and their comrades, and patiently wait till we return loaded with the spoils of the Aztecs."[23]

The politic orator had touched the right chord in the bosoms of the soldiers. As he spoke, their resentment gradually died away. The faded visions of future riches and glory, rekindled by his eloquence, again floated before their imaginations. The first shock over, they felt ashamed of their temporary distrust. The enthusiasm for their leader revived, for they felt that under his banner only they could hope for victory; and, as he concluded, they testified the revulsion of their feelings by making the air ring with their shouts, "To Mexico! to Mexico!"

The destruction of his fleet by Cortés is, perhaps, the most remarkable passage in the life of this remarkable man. History, indeed, affords examples of a similar expedient in emergencies somewhat similar; but none where the chances of success were so precarious and defeat would be so disastrous.[24] Had he failed, it

[23] "Que ninguno seria tan cobarde y tan pusilánime que queria estimar su vida mas que la suya, ni de tan debil corazon que dudase de ir con él á México, donde tanto bien le estaba aparejado, y que si acaso se determinaba alguno de dejar de hacer este se podia ir bendito de Dios á Cuba en el navío que habia dexado, de que antes de mucho se arrepentiria, y pelaria las barbas, viendo la buena ventura que esperaba le sucederia." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 82.

[24] Perhaps the most remarkable of these examples is that of Julian, who, in his unfortunate Assyrian invasion, burnt the fleet which had carried him up the Tigris. The story is told by Gibbon, who shows very satisfactorily that the fleet would have proved a hinderance rather

might well seem an act of madness. Yet it was the fruit of deliberate calculation. He had set fortune, fame, life itself, all upon the cast, and must abide the issue. There was no alternative in his mind but to succeed or perish. The measure he adopted greatly increased the chance of success. But to carry it into execution, in the face of an incensed and desperate soldiery, was an act of resolution that has few parallels in history.[25]

than a help to the emperor in his further progress. See History of the Decline and Fall, vol. ix. p. 177, of Milman's excellent edition.

[25] The account given in the text of the destruction of the fleet is not that of Bernal Diaz, who states it to have been accomplished not only with the knowledge, but entire approbation of the army, though at the suggestion of Cortés. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 58.) This version is sanctioned by Dr. Robertson (History of America, vol. ii. pp. 253, 254). One should be very slow to depart from the honest record of the old soldier, especially when confirmed by the discriminating judgment of the Historian of America. But Cortés expressly declares in his letter to the emperor that he ordered the vessels to be sunk, without the knowledge of his men, from the apprehension that, if the means of escape were open, the timid and disaffected might at some future time avail themselves of them. (Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 41.) The cavaliers Montejo and Puertocarrero, on their visit to Spain, stated, in their depositions, that the general destroyed the fleet on information received from the pilots. (Declaraciones, MSS.) Narvaez in his accusation of Cortés, and Las Casas, speak of the act in terms of unqualified reprobation, charging him, moreover, with bribing the pilots to bore holes in the bottoms of the ships in order to disable them. (Demanda de Narvaez, MS.—Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 122.) The same account of the transaction, though with a very different commentary as to its merits, is repeated by Oviedo (Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 2), Gomara (Crónica, cap. 42), and Peter Martyr (De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 1), all of whom had access to the best sources of information. The affair, so remarkable as the act of one individual, becomes absolutely incredible when considered as the result of so many independent wills. It

is not improbable that Bernal Diaz, from his known devotion to the cause, may have been one of the few to whom Cortés confided his purpose. The veteran, in writing his narrative, many years after, may have mistaken a part for the whole, and in his zeal to secure to the army a full share of the glory of the expedition, too exclusively appropriated by the general (a great object, as he tells us, of his history), may have distributed among his comrades the credit of an exploit which, in this instance, at least, properly belonged to their commander. Whatever be the cause of the discrepancy, his solitary testimony can hardly be sustained against the weight of contemporary evidence from such competent sources.*

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* [Prescott's account of the circumstances attending the destruction of the fleet has been contested at great length by Señor Ramirez, who insists on accepting the statements of Bernal Diaz without qualification and ascribing to the army an equal share with the general in the merit of the act. He remarks with truth that the language of Cortés—"Tuve manera, como so color que los dichos navíos no estaban para navegar, los eché á la costa"—contains no *express declaration*, as stated by Prescott, that the order for the fleet to be sunk was given without the knowledge of the army, but would, at the most, lead to an inference to that effect. "Nor can even this," he adds, "be admitted, since, in order to persuade the soldiers that the ships were unfit for sailing, he must have had an understanding with the mariners who were to make the statement, and with his friends who were to confirm it." This is, however, very inefficient reasoning. It is not pretended that Cortés had no confidants and agents in the transaction. The question of real importance is, Was the resolution taken, as Bernal Diaz asserts, *openly and by the advice* of the whole army,—"claramente, por consejo de todos los demas soldados"? or was it formed by Cortés, and were measures taken for giving effect to it, without any communication with the mass of his followers? The newly discovered relation of Tápia is cited by Señor Ramirez as "in perfect accordance with the testimony of Diaz and destructive of every supposition of mystery and secrecy." Yet Tápia says, with Herrera, that Cortés caused holes to be bored in the ships and their unserviceable condition to be reported to him, and thereupon gave orders for their destruction; no mention being made of the concurrence of the soldiers at any stage of the proceedings.—ED.]

Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, Bishop of Chiapa, whose "History of the Indies" forms an important authority for the preceding pages, was one of the most remarkable men of the sixteenth century. He was born at Seville in 1474. His father accompanied Columbus, as a common soldier, in his first voyage to the New World; and he acquired wealth enough by his vocation to place his son at the University of Salamanca. During his residence there, he was attended by an Indian page, whom his father had brought with him from Hispaniola. Thus the uncompromising advocate for freedom began his career as the owner of a slave himself. But he did not long remain so, for his slave was one of those subsequently liberated by the generous commands of Isabella.

In 1498 he completed his studies in law and divinity, took his degree of licentiate, and in 1502 accompanied Oviedo, in the most brilliant armada which had been equipped for the Western World. Eight years after, he was admitted to priest's orders in St. Domingo, an event somewhat memorable, since he was the first person consecrated in that holy office in the colonies. On the occupation of Cuba by the Spaniards, Las Casas passed over to that island, where he obtained a curacy in a small settlement. He soon, however, made himself known to the governor, Velasquez, by the fidelity with which he discharged his duties, and especially by the influence which his mild and benevolent teaching obtained for him over the Indians. Through his intimacy with the governor, Las Casas had the means of ameliorating the condition of the conquered race, and from this time he may be said to have consecrated all his energies to this one great object. At this period, the scheme of *repartimientos*, introduced soon after the discoveries of Columbus, was in full operation, and the aboriginal population of the islands was rapidly melting away under a system of oppression which has been seldom paralleled in the annals of mankind. Las Casas, outraged at the daily exhibition of crime and misery, returned to Spain to obtain some redress from government. Ferdinand died soon after his arrival. Charles was absent, but the reins were held by Cardinal Ximenes, who listened to the complaints of the benevolent missionary, and, with his characteristic vigor, instituted a commission of three Hieronymite friars, with full authority, as already noticed in the text, to reform abuses. Las Casas was honored, for his exertions, with the title of "Protector General of the Indians."

The new commissioners behaved with great discretion. But their office was one of consummate difficulty, as it required time to intro-

duce important changes in established institutions. The ardent and impetuous temper of Las Casas, disdaining every consideration of prudence, overleaped all these obstacles, and chafed under what he considered the lukewarm and temporizing policy of the commissioners. As he was at no pains to conceal his disgust, the parties soon came to a misunderstanding with each other; and Las Casas again returned to the mother-country, to stimulate the government, if possible, to more effectual measures for the protection of the natives.

He found the country under the administration of the Flemings, who discovered from the first a wholesome abhorrence of the abuses practised in the colonies, and who, in short, seemed inclined to tolerate no peculation or extortion but their own. They acquiesced, without much difficulty, in the recommendations of Las Casas, who proposed to relieve the natives by sending out Castilian laborers and by importing negro slaves into the islands. This last proposition has brought heavy obloquy on the head of its author, who has been freely accused of having thus introduced negro slavery into the New World. Others, with equal groundlessness, have attempted to vindicate his memory from the reproach of having recommended the measure at all. Unfortunately for the latter assertion, Las Casas, in his History of the Indies, confesses, with deep regret and humiliation, his advice on this occasion, founded on the most erroneous views, as he frankly states; since, to use his own words, "the same law applies equally to the negro as to the Indian." But, so far from having introduced slavery by this measure into the islands, the importation of blacks there dates from the beginning of the century. It was recommended by some of the wisest and most benevolent persons in the colony, as the means of diminishing the amount of human suffering; since the African was more fitted by his constitution to endure the climate and the severe toil imposed on the slave, than the feeble and effeminate islander. It was a suggestion of humanity, however mistaken, and, considering the circumstances under which it occurred, and the age, it may well be forgiven in Las Casas, especially taking into view that, as he became more enlightened himself, he was so ready to testify his regret at having unadvisedly countenanced the measure.

The experiment recommended by Las Casas was made, but, through the apathy of Fonseca, president of the Indian Council, not heartily,— and it failed. The good missionary now proposed another and much bolder scheme. He requested that a large tract of country in Tierra Firme, in the neighborhood of the famous pearl-fisheries, might be

ceded to him for the purpose of planting a colony there, and of converting the natives to Christianity. He required that none of the authorities of the islands, and no military force, especially, should be allowed to interfere with his movements. He pledged himself by peaceful means alone to accomplish all that had been done by violence in other quarters. He asked only that a certain number of laborers should attend him, invited by a bounty from government, and that he might further be accompanied by fifty Dominicans, who were to be distinguished like himself by a peculiar dress, that should lead the natives to suppose them a different race of men from the Spaniards. This proposition was denounced as chimerical and fantastic by some, whose own opportunities of observation entitled their judgment to respect. These men declared the Indian, from his nature, incapable of civilization. The question was one of such moment that Charles the Fifth ordered the discussion to be conducted before him. The opponent of Las Casas was first heard, when the good missionary, in answer, warmed by the noble cause he was to maintain, and nothing daunted by the august presence in which he stood, delivered himself with a fervent eloquence that went directly to the hearts of his auditors. "The Christian religion," he concluded, "is equal in its operation, and is accommodated to every nation on the globe. It robs no one of his freedom, violates none of his inherent rights, on the ground that he is a slave by nature, as pretended; and it well becomes your Majesty to banish so monstrous an oppression from your kingdoms in the beginning of your reign, that the Almighty may make it long and glorious."

In the end Las Casas prevailed. He was furnished with the men and means for establishing his colony, and in 1520 embarked for America. But the result was a lamentable failure. The country assigned to him lay in the neighborhood of a Spanish settlement, which had already committed some acts of violence on the natives. To quell the latter, now thrown into commotion, an armed force was sent by the young "Admiral" from Hispaniola. The very people, among whom Las Casas was to appear as the messenger of peace, were thus involved in deadly strife with his countrymen. The enemy had been before him in his own harvest. While waiting for the close of these turbulent scenes, the laborers, whom he had taken out with him, dispersed, in despair of effecting their object. And after an attempt to pursue, with his faithful Dominican brethren, the work of colonization further, other untoward circumstances compelled them to abandon the

project altogether. Its unfortunate author, overwhelmed with chagrin, took refuge in the Dominican monastery in the island of Hispaniola. The failure of the enterprise should, no doubt, be partly ascribed to circumstances beyond the control of its projector. Yet it is impossible not to recognize in the whole scheme, and in the conduct of it, the hand of one much more familiar with books than men, who, in the seclusion of the cloister, had meditated and matured his benevolent plans, without fully estimating the obstacles that lay in their way, and who counted too confidently on meeting the same generous enthusiasm in others which glowed in his own bosom.

He found, in his disgrace, the greatest consolation and sympathy from the brethren of St. Dominic, who stood forth as the avowed champions of the Indians on all occasions, and showed themselves as devoted to the cause of freedom in the New World as they had been hostile to it in the Old. Las Casas soon became a member of their order, and, in his monastic retirement, applied himself for many years to the performance of his spiritual duties, and the composition of various works, all directed, more or less, to vindicate the rights of the Indians. Here, too, he commenced his great work, the "Historia general de las Indias," which he pursued, at intervals of leisure, from 1527 till a few years before his death. His time, however, was not wholly absorbed by these labors; and he found means to engage in several laborious missions. He preached the gospel among the natives of Nicaragua and Guatemala, and succeeded in converting and reducing to obedience some wild tribes in the latter province, who had defied the arms of his countrymen. In all these pious labors he was sustained by his Dominican brethren. At length, in 1539, he crossed the waters again, to seek further assistance and recruits among the members of his order.

A great change had taken place in the board that now presided over the colonial department. The cold and narrow-minded Fonseca, who, during his long administration, had, it may be truly said, shown himself the enemy of every great name and good measure connected with the Indians, had died. His place, as president of the Indian Council, was filled by Loaysa, Charles's confessor. This functionary, general of the Dominicans, gave ready audience to Las Casas, and showed a good will to his proposed plans of reform. Charles, too, now grown older, seemed to feel more deeply the responsibility of his station, and the necessity of redressing the wrongs, too long tolerated, of his American subjects. The state of the colonies became a common

topic of discussion, not only in the council, but in the court; and the representations of Las Casas made an impression that manifested itself in the change of sentiment more clearly every day. He promoted this by the publication of some of his writings at this time, and especially of his "Brevísima Relacion," or Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies, in which he sets before the reader the manifold atrocities committed by his countrymen in different parts of the New World in the prosecution of their conquests. It is a tale of woe. Every line of the work may be said to be written in blood. However good the motives of its author, we may regret that the book was ever written. He would have been certainly right not to spare his countrymen; to exhibit their misdeeds in their true colors, and by this appalling picture—for such it would have been—to have recalled the nation, and those who governed it, to a proper sense of the iniquitous career it was pursuing on the other side of the water. But, to produce a more striking effect, he has lent a willing ear to every tale of violence and rapine, and magnified the amount to a degree which borders on the ridiculous. The wild extravagance of his numerical estimates is of itself sufficient to shake confidence in the accuracy of his statements generally. Yet the naked truth was too startling in itself to demand the aid of exaggeration. The book found great favor with foreigners; was rapidly translated into various languages, and ornamented with characteristic designs, which seemed to put into action all the recorded atrocities of the text. It excited somewhat different feelings in his own countrymen, particularly the people of the colonies, who considered themselves the subjects of a gross, however undesigned, misrepresentation; and in his future intercourse with them it contributed, no doubt, to diminish his influence and consequent usefulness, by the spirit of alienation, and even resentment, which it engendered.

Las Casas' honest intentions, his enlightened views and long experience, gained him deserved credit at home. This was visible in the important regulations made at this time for the better government of the colonies, and particularly in respect to the aborigines. A code of laws, *Las Nuevas Leyes*, was passed, having for their avowed object the enfranchisement of this unfortunate race; and in the wisdom and humanity of its provisions it is easy to recognize the hand of the Protector of the Indians. The history of Spanish colonial legislation is the history of the impotent struggles of the government in behalf of the natives, against the avarice and cruelty of its subjects. It proves that an empire powerful at home—and Spain then was so—may

be so widely extended that its authority shall scarcely be felt in its extremities.

The government testified their sense of the signal services of Las Casas by promoting him to the bishopric of Cuzco, one of the richest sees in the colonies. But the disinterested soul of the missionary did not covet riches or preferment. He rejected the proffered dignity without hesitation. Yet he could not refuse the bishopric of Chiapa, a country which, from the poverty and ignorance of its inhabitants, offered a good field for his spiritual labors. In 1544, though at the advanced age of seventy, he took upon himself these new duties, and embarked, for the fifth and last time, for the shores of America. His fame had preceded him. The colonists looked on his coming with apprehension, regarding him as the real author of the new code, which struck at their ancient immunities, and which he would be likely to enforce to the letter. Everywhere he was received with coldness. In some places his person was menaced with violence. But the venerable presence of the prelate, his earnest expostulations, which flowed so obviously from conviction, and his generous self-devotion, so regardless of personal considerations, preserved him from this outrage. Yet he showed no disposition to conciliate his opponents by what he deemed an unworthy concession; and he even stretched the arm of authority so far as to refuse the sacraments to any who still held an Indian in bondage. This high-handed measure not only outraged the planters, but incurred the disapprobation of his own brethren in the Church. Three years were spent in disagreeable altercation without coming to any decision. The Spaniards, to borrow their accustomed phraseology on these occasions, "obeying the law, but not fulfilling it," applied to the court for further instructions; and the bishop, no longer supported by his own brethren, thwarted by the colonial magistrates, and outraged by the people, relinquished a post where his presence could be no longer useful, and returned to spend the remainder of his days in tranquillity at home.

Yet, though withdrawn to his Dominican convent, he did not pass his hours in slothful seclusion. He again appeared as the champion of Indian freedom in the famous controversy with Sepulveda, one of the most acute scholars of the time, and far surpassing Las Casas in elegance and correctness of composition. But the Bishop of Chiapa was his superior in argument, at least in this discussion, where he had right and reason on his side. In his "Thirty Propositions," as they are called, in which he sums up the several points of his case, he main-

tains that the circumstance of infidelity in religion cannot deprive a nation of its political rights; that the Holy See, in its grant of the New World to the Catholic sovereigns, designed only to confer the right of converting its inhabitants to Christianity, and of thus winning a peaceful authority over them; and that no authority could be valid which rested on other foundations. This was striking at the root of the colonial empire as assumed by Castile. But the disinterested views of Las Casas, the respect entertained for his principles, and the general conviction, it may be, of the force of his arguments, prevented the court from taking umbrage at their import, or from pressing them to their legitimate conclusion. While the writings of his adversary were interdicted from publication, he had the satisfaction to see his own printed and circulated in every quarter.

From this period his time was distributed among his religious duties, his studies, and the composition of his works, especially his History. His constitution, naturally excellent, had been strengthened by a life of temperance and toil; and he retained his faculties unimpaired to the last. He died after a short illness, July, 1566, at the great age of ninety-two, in his monastery of Atocha, at Madrid.

The character of Las Casas may be inferred from his career. He was one of those to whose gifted minds are revealed those glorious moral truths which, like the lights of heaven, are fixed and the same forever, but which, though now familiar, were hidden from all but a few penetrating intellects by the general darkness of the time in which he lived. He was a reformer, and had the virtues and errors of a reformer. He was inspired by one great and glorious idea. This was the key to all his thoughts, to all that he said and wrote, to every act of his long life. It was this which urged him to lift the voice of rebuke in the presence of princes, to brave the menaces of an infuriated populace, to cross seas, to traverse mountains and deserts, to incur the alienation of friends, the hostility of enemies, to endure obloquy, insult, and persecution. It was this, too, which made him reckless of obstacles, led him to count too confidently on the co-operation of others, animated his discussion, sharpened his invective, too often steeped his pen in the gall of personal vituperation, led him into gross exaggeration and over-coloring in his statements, and a blind credulity of evil that rendered him unsafe as a counsellor and unsuccessful in the practical concerns of life. His views were pure and elevated. But his manner of enforcing them was not always so commendable. This may be gathered not only from the testimony of the colonists

generally, who, as parties interested, may be supposed to have been prejudiced, but from that of the members of his own profession, persons high in office, and of integrity beyond suspicion, not to add that of missionaries engaged in the same good work with himself. These, in their letters and reported conversations, charged the Bishop of Chiapa with an arrogant, uncharitable temper, which deluded his judgment, and vented itself in unwarrantable crimination against such as resisted his projects or differed from him in opinion. Las Casas, in short, was a man. But, if he had the errors of humanity, he had virtues that rarely belong to it. The best commentary on his character is the estimation which he obtained in the court of his sovereign. A liberal pension was settled on him after his last return from America, which he chiefly expended on charitable objects. No measure of importance relating to the Indians was taken without his advice. He lived to see the fruits of his efforts in the positive amelioration of their condition, and in the popular admission of those great truths which it had been the object of his life to unfold. And who shall say how much of the successful efforts and arguments since made in behalf of persecuted humanity may be traced to the example and the writings of this illustrious philanthropist?

His compositions were numerous, most of them of no great length. Some were printed in his time; others have since appeared, especially in the French translation of Llorente. His great work, which occupied him at intervals for more than thirty years, the *Historia general de las Indias*, still remains in manuscript. It is in three volumes, divided into as many parts, and embraces the colonial history from the discovery of the country by Columbus to the year 1520. The style of the work, like that of all his writings, is awkward, disjointed, and excessively diffuse, abounding in repetitions, irrelevant digressions, and pedantic citations. But it is sprinkled over with passages of a different kind; and, when he is roused by the desire to exhibit some gross wrong to the natives, his simple language kindles into eloquence, and he expounds those great and immutable principles of natural justice which in his own day were so little understood. His defect as a historian is that he wrote history, like everything else, under the influence of one dominant idea. He is always pleading the cause of the persecuted native. This gives a coloring to events which passed under his own eyes, and filled him with a too easy confidence in those which he gathered from the reports of others. Much of the preceding portion of our narrative which relates to affairs in Cuba must have come

under his personal observation. But he seems incapable of shaking off his early deference to Velasquez, who, as we have noticed, treated him, while a poor curate in the island, with peculiar confidence. For Cortés, on the other hand, he appears to have felt a profound contempt. He witnessed the commencement of his career, when he was standing, cap in hand, as it were, at the proud governor's door, thankful even for a smile of recognition. Las Casas remembered all this, and, when he saw the Conqueror of Mexico rise into a glory and renown that threw his former patron into the shade,—and most unfairly, as Las Casas deemed, at the expense of that patron,—the good bishop could not withhold his indignation, nor speak of him otherwise than with a sneer, as a mere upstart adventurer.

It is the existence of defects like these, and the fear of the misconception likely to be produced by them, that have so long prevented the publication of his history. At his death, he left it to the convent of San Gregorio, at Valladolid, with directions that it should not be printed for forty years, nor be seen during that time by any layman or member of the fraternity. Herrera, however, was permitted to consult it, and he liberally transferred its contents to his own volumes, which appeared in 1601. The Royal Academy of History revised the first volume of Las Casas some years since, with a view to the publication of the whole work. But the indiscreet and imaginative style of the composition, according to Navarrete, and the consideration that its most important facts were already known through other channels, induced that body to abandon the design. With deference to their judgment, this seems to me a mistake. Las Casas, with every deduction, is one of the great writers of the nation; great from the important truths which he discerned when none else could see them, and from the courage with which he proclaimed them to the world. They are scattered over his History as well as his other writings. They are not, however, the passages transcribed by Herrera. In the statement of fact, too, however partial and prejudiced, no one will impeach his integrity; and, as an enlightened contemporary, his evidence is of undeniable value. It is due to the memory of Las Casas that, if his work be given to the public at all, it should not be through the garbled extracts of one who was no fair interpreter of his opinions. Las Casas does not speak for himself in the courtly pages of Herrera. Yet the History should not be published without a suitable commentary to enlighten the student and guard him against any undue prejudices in the writer. We may hope that the entire manuscript will

one day be given to the world under the auspices of that distinguished body which has already done so much in this way for the illustration of the national annals.

The life of Las Casas has been several times written. The two memoirs most worthy of notice are that by Llorente, late Secretary of the Inquisition, prefixed to his French translation of the bishop's controversial writings, and that by Quintana, in the third volume of his "Españoles célebres," where it presents a truly noble specimen of biographical composition, enriched by a literary criticism as acute as it is candid. I have gone to the greater length in this notice, from the interesting character of the man, and the little that is known of him to the English reader. I have also transferred a passage from his work in the original to the Appendix, that the Spanish scholar may form an idea of his style of composition. He ceases to be an authority for us henceforth, as his account of the expedition of Cortés terminates with the destruction of the navy.

BOOK THIRD.

MARCH TO MEXICO.

BOOK III.

MARCH TO MEXICO.

CHAPTER I.

PROCEEDINGS AT CEMPOALLA.—THE SPANIARDS CLIMB THE TABLE-LAND.—PICTURESQUE SCENERY.—TRANSACTIONS WITH THE NATIVES.—EMBASSY TO TLASCALA.

1519.

WHILE at Cempoalla, Cortés received a message from Escalante, his commander at Villa Rica, informing him there were four strange ships hovering off the coast, and that they took no notice of his repeated signals. This intelligence greatly alarmed the general, who feared they might be a squadron sent by the governor of Cuba to interfere with his movements. In much haste, he set out at the head of a few horsemen, and, ordering a party of light infantry to follow, posted back to Villa Rica. The rest of the army he left in charge of Alvarado and of Gonzalo de Sandoval, a young officer who had begun to give evidence of the uncommon qualities which have secured to him so distinguished a rank among the conquerors of Mexico.

Escalante would have persuaded the general, on his reaching the town, to take some rest, and allow him to go in search of the strangers. But Cortés replied with the homely proverb, "A wounded hare takes no nap,"[1] and, without stopping to refresh himself or his men, pushed on three or four leagues to the north, where he understood the ships were at anchor. On the way, he fell in with three Spaniards, just landed from them. To his eager inquiries whence they came, they replied that they belonged to a squadron fitted out by Francisco de Garay, governor of Jamaica. This person, the year previous, had visited the Florida coast, and obtained from Spain — where he had some interest at court — authority over the countries he might discover in that vicinity. The three men, consisting of a notary and two witnesses, had been sent on shore to warn their countrymen under Cortés to desist from what was considered an encroachment on the territories of Garay. Probably neither the governor of Jamaica nor his officers had any very precise notion of the geography and limits of these territories.

Cortés saw at once there was nothing to apprehend from this quarter. He would have been glad, however, if he could by any means have induced the crews of the ships to join his expedition. He found no difficulty in persuading the notary and his companions. But when he came in sight of the vessels, the people on board, distrusting the good terms on which their comrades appeared to be with the Spaniards, refused to send their boat ashore. In this dilemma, Cortés had recourse to a stratagem.

[1] "Cabra coja no tenga siesta."

He ordered three of his own men to exchange dresses with the new-comers. He then drew off his little band in sight of the vessels, affecting to return to the city. In the night, however, he came back to the same place, and lay in ambush, directing the disguised Spaniards, when the morning broke, and they could be discerned, to make signals to those on board. The artifice succeeded. A boat put off, filled with armed men, and three or four leaped on shore. But they soon detected the deceit, and Cortés, springing from his ambush, made them prisoners. Their comrades in the boat, alarmed, pushed off, at once, for the vessels, which soon got under way, leaving those on shore to their fate. Thus ended the affair. Cortés returned to Cempoalla, with the addition of half a dozen able-bodied recruits, and, what was of more importance, relieved in his own mind from the apprehension of interference with his operations.[2]

He now made arrangements for his speedy departure from the Totonac capital. The forces reserved for the expedition amounted to about four hundred foot and fifteen horse, with seven pieces of artillery. He obtained, also, from the cacique of Cempoalla, thirteen hundred warriors, and a thousand *tamanes*, or porters, to drag the guns and transport the baggage. He took forty more of their principal men as hostages, as well as to guide him on the way and serve him by their counsels among the strange tribes he was to visit. They were,

[2] Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 1.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 42–45.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 59, 60.

in fact, of essential service to him throughout the march.[3]

The remainder of his Spanish force he left in garrison at Villa Rica de Vera Cruz, the command of which he had intrusted to the alguacil, Juan de Escalante, an officer devoted to his interests. The selection was judicious. It was important to place there a man who would resist any hostile interference from his European rivals, on the one hand, and maintain the present friendly relations with the natives, on the other. Cortés recommended the Totonac chiefs to apply to this officer in case of any difficulty, assuring them that so long as they remained faithful to their new sovereign and religion they should find a sure protection in the Spaniards.

Before marching, the general spoke a few words of encouragement to his own men. He told them they were now to embark in earnest on an enterprise which had been the great object of their desires, and that the blessed Saviour would carry them victorious through every battle with their enemies. "Indeed," he added, "this assurance must be our stay, for every other refuge is now cut off but that afforded by the providence of God and your own stout hearts."[4] He ended by

[3] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 44.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 61.—The number of the Indian auxiliaries stated in the text is much larger than that allowed by either Cortés or Diaz. But both these actors in the drama show too obvious a desire to magnify their own prowess, by exaggerating the numbers of their foes and diminishing their own, to be entitled to much confidence in their estimates.

[4] "No teniamos otro socorro, ni ayuda sino el de Dios; porque ya no teniamos nauíos para ir á Cuba, salvo nuestro buen pelear y coraçones fuertes." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 59.

comparing their achievements to those of the ancient Romans, "in phrases of honeyed eloquence far beyond anything I can repeat," says the brave and simple-hearted chronicler who heard them. Cortés was, indeed, master of that eloquence which went to the soldiers' hearts. For their sympathies were his, and he shared in that romantic spirit of adventure which belonged to them. "We are ready to obey you," they cried as with one voice. "Our fortunes, for better or worse, are cast with yours."[5] Taking leave, therefore, of their hospitable Indian friends, the little army, buoyant with high hopes and lofty plans of conquest, set forward on the march to Mexico.

It was the sixteenth of August, 1519. During the first day, their road lay through the *tierra caliente*, the beautiful land where they had been so long lingering; the land of the vanilla, cochineal, cacao (not till later days of the orange and the sugar-cane), products which, indigenous to Mexico, have now become the luxuries of Europe; the land where the fruits and the flowers chase one another in unbroken circle through the year; where the gales are loaded with perfumes till the sense aches at their sweetness, and the groves are filled with many-colored birds, and insects whose enamelled wings glisten like diamonds in the bright sun of the tropics. Such are the magical splendors of this paradise of the senses. Yet Nature, who generally works in a spirit of compensation, has provided one here; since the same burning sun which quickens into life these glories of the vegetable and animal kingdoms calls forth the

5 "Y todos á vna le respondímos, que hariamos lo que ordenasse, que echada estaua la suerte de la buena ó mala ventura." Loc. cit.

pestilent *malaria*, with its train of bilious disorders, unknown to the cold skies of the North. The season in which the Spaniards were there, the rainy months of summer, was precisely that in which the *vómito* rages with greatest fury; when the European stranger hardly ventures to set his foot on shore, still less to linger there a day. We find no mention made of it in the records of the Conquerors, nor any notice, indeed, of an uncommon mortality. The fact doubtless corroborates the theory of those who postpone the appearance of the yellow fever till long after the occupation of the country by the whites. It proves, at least, that, if existing before, it must have been in a very much mitigated form.

After some leagues of travel over roads made nearly impassable by the summer rains, the troops began the gradual ascent—more gradual on the eastern than the western declivities of the Cordilleras—which leads up to the table-land of Mexico. At the close of the second day they reached Xalapa, a place still retaining the same Aztec name that it has communicated to the drug raised in its environs, the medicinal virtues of which are now known throughout the world.[6] This town stands midway up the long ascent, at an elevation where the vapors from the ocean, touching in their westerly progress, maintain a rich verdure throughout the year. Though somewhat infected with these marine fogs, the air is usually bland and salubrious. The wealthy resident of the lower regions retires here for safety in the heats of summer, and the traveller hails

[6] Jalap, *Convolvulus jalapæ*. The *x* and *j* are convertible consonants in the Castilian.

its groves of oak with delight, as announcing that he is above the deadly influence of the *vómito*.[7] From this delicious spot, the Spaniards enjoyed one of the grandest prospects in nature. Before them was the steep ascent —much steeper after this point—which they were to climb. On the right rose the Sierra Madre, girt with its dark belt of pines, and its long lines of shadowy hills stretching away in the distance. To the south, in brilliant contrast, stood the mighty Orizaba, with his white robe of snow descending far down his sides, towering in solitary grandeur, the giant spectre of the Andes. Behind them, they beheld, unrolled at their feet, the magnificent *tierra caliente*, with its gay confusion of meadows, streams, and flowering forests, sprinkled over with shining Indian villages, while a faint line of light on the edge of the horizon told them that there was the ocean, beyond which were the kindred and country they were many of them never more to see.

Still winding their way upward, amidst scenery as different as was the temperature from that of the regions below, the army passed through settlements containing some hundreds of inhabitants each, and on the fourth day reached a "strong town," as Cortés terms it, standing on a rocky eminence, supposed to be that now known by the Mexican name of Naulinco. Here they were hospitably entertained by the inhabitants, who were friends of the Totonacs. Cortés endeavored,

7 The heights of Xalapa are crowned with a convent dedicated to St. Francis, erected in later days by Cortés, showing, in its solidity, like others of the period built under the same auspices, says an agreeable traveller, a military as well as religious design. Tudor's Travels in North America (London, 1834), vol. ii. p. 186.

through Father Olmedo, to impart to them some knowledge of Christian truths, which were kindly received, and the Spaniards were allowed to erect a cross in the place, for the future adoration of the natives. Indeed, the route of the army might be tracked by these emblems of man's salvation, raised wherever a willing population of Indians invited it, suggesting a very different idea from what the same memorials intimate to the traveller in these mountain solitudes in our day.[8]

[8] Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 1.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 40.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 44.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83.—"Every hundred yards of our route," says the traveller last quoted, speaking of this very region, "was marked by the melancholy erection of a wooden cross, denoting, according to the custom of the country, the commission of some horrible murder on the spot where it was planted." (Travels in North America, vol. ii. p. 188.)—[Señor Alaman stoutly defends his countrymen from this gross exaggeration, as he pronounces it, of Mr. Tudor. For although it is unhappily true, he says, that travellers were formerly liable to be attacked in going from the city of Mexico to Vera Cruz, and that the *diligence* which passes over this road is still frequently stopped, yet it is very seldom that personal violence is offered. "Foreign tourists are prone to believe all the stories of atrocities that are related to them, and generally, at inns, fall into the society of persons who take delight in furnishing a large supply of such materials. The crosses that are to be met with in the country are not so numerous as is pretended; nor are all of them memorials of assassinations committed in the places where they have been erected. Many are merely objects of devotion, and others indicate the spot where two roads diverge from each other. We must, nevertheless, confess that this matter is one that demands all the attention of the government; while the candid foreigner will doubtless admit that it is not easy to exercise police supervision over roads on which the central points of population lie far apart, as in countries like ours, instead of being so near that a watch can be maintained from them over the intermediate spaces, as is the case in most countries of Europe and in a great part of the United States." Conquista de Méjico (trad. de Vega), tom. i. p. 251.]

The troops now entered a rugged defile, the Bishop's Pass,[9] as it is called, capable of easy defence against an army. Very soon they experienced a most unwelcome change of climate. Cold winds from the mountains, mingled with rain, and, as they rose still higher, with driving sleet and hail, drenched their garments, and seemed to penetrate to their very bones. The Spaniards, indeed, partially covered by their armor and thick jackets of quilted cotton, were better able to resist the weather, though their long residence in the sultry regions of the valley made them still keenly sensible to the annoyance. But the poor Indians, natives of the *tierra caliente*, with little protection in the way of covering, sank under the rude assault of the elements, and several of them perished on the road.

The aspect of the country was as wild and dreary as the climate. Their route wound along the spur of the huge Cofre de Perote, which borrows its name, both in Mexican and Castilian, from the coffer-like rock on its summit.[10] It is one of the great volcanoes of New Spain. It exhibits now, indeed, no vestige of a crater on its top, but abundant traces of volcanic action at its base, where acres of lava, blackened scoriæ, and cinders proclaim the convulsions of nature, while numerous shrubs and mouldering trunks of enormous trees, among the crevices, attest the antiquity of these

9 *El Paso del Obispo.* Cortés named it *Puerto del Nombre de Dios.* Viaje, ap. Lorenzana, p. ii.

10 The Aztec name is Nauhcampatepetl, from *nauhcampa*, "anything square," and *tepetl*, "a mountain." — Humboldt, who waded through forests and snows to its summit, ascertained its height to be 4089 metres, = 13,414 feet, above the sea. See his Vues des Cordillères, p. 234, and Essai politique, vol. i. p. 266.

events. Working their toilsome way across this scene of desolation, the path often led them along the borders of precipices, down whose sheer depths of two or three thousand feet the shrinking eye might behold another climate, and see all the glowing vegetation of the tropics choking up the bottom of the ravines.

After three days of this fatiguing travel, the way-worn army emerged through another defile, the *Sierra del Agua.*[11] They soon came upon an open reach of country, with a genial climate, such as belongs to the temperate latitudes of southern Europe. They had reached the level of more than seven thousand feet above the ocean, where the great sheet of table-land spreads out for hundreds of miles along the crests of the Cordilleras. The country showed signs of careful cultivation, but the products were, for the most part, not familiar to the eyes of the Spaniards. Fields and hedges of the various tribes of the cactus, the towering organum, and plantations of aloes with rich yellow clusters of flowers on their tall stems, affording drink and clothing to the Aztec, were everywhere seen. The plants of the torrid and temperate zones had disappeared, one after another, with the ascent into these elevated regions. The glossy and dark-leaved banana, the chief, as it is the cheapest, aliment of the countries below, had long since faded from the landscape. The hardy maize, however, still shone with its golden harvests in all the pride of cultivation, the great staple of the higher equally with the lower terraces of the plateau.

[11] The same mentioned in Cortés' Letter as the *Puerto de la Leña.* Viaje, ap. Lorenzana, p. iii.

Suddenly the troops came upon what seemed the environs of a populous city, which, as they entered it, appeared to surpass even that of Cempoalla in the size and solidity of its structures.[12] These were of stone and lime, many of them spacious and tolerably high. There were thirteen *teocallis* in the place; and in the suburbs they had seen a receptacle, in which, according to Bernal Diaz, were stored a hundred thousand skulls of human victims, all piled and ranged in order! He reports the number as one he had ascertained by counting them himself.[13] Whatever faith we may attach to the precise accuracy of his figures, the result is almost equally startling. The Spaniards were destined to become familiar with this appalling spectacle as they approached nearer to the Aztec capital.

The lord of the town ruled over twenty thousand vassals. He was tributary to Montezuma, and a strong Mexican garrison was quartered in the place. He had probably been advised of the approach of the Spaniards, and doubted how far it would be welcome to his sovereign. At all events, he gave them a cold reception, the more unpalatable after the extraordinary sufferings of the last few days. To the inquiry of Cortés, whether he were subject to Montezuma, he answered,

[12] Now known by the euphonious Indian name of Tlatlauqnitepec. (Viaje, ap. Lorenzana, p. iv.) It is the *Cocotlan* of Bernal Diaz. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 61.) The old Conquerors made sorry work with the Aztec names, both of places and persons, for which they must be allowed to have had ample excuse.

[13] "Puestos tantos rimeros de calaueras de muertos, que se podian bien contar, segun el concierto con que estauan puestas, que me parece que eran mas de cien mil, y digo otra vez sobre cien mil." Ibid., ubi supra.

with real or affected surprise, "Who is there that is not a vassal of Montezuma?" [14] The general told him, with some emphasis, that *he* was not. He then explained whence and why he came, assuring him that he served a monarch who had princes for his vassals as powerful as the Aztec monarch himself.

The cacique, in turn, fell nothing short of the Spaniard in the pompous display of the grandeur and resources of the Indian emperor. He told his guest that Montezuma could muster thirty great vassals, each master of a hundred thousand men! [15] His revenues were immense, as every subject, however poor, paid something. They were all expended on his magnificent state and in support of his armies. These were continually in the field, while garrisons were maintained in most of the large cities of the empire. More than twenty thousand victims, the fruit of his wars, were annually sacrificed on the altars of his gods! His capital, the cacique said, stood in a lake, in the centre of a spacious valley. The lake was commanded by the emperor's vessels, and the approach to the city was by means of causeways, several miles long, connected in parts by wooden bridges, which, when raised,

[14] "El qual casi admirado de lo que le preguntaba, me respondió, diciendo; ¿que quién no era vasallo de Muctezuma? queriendo decir, que allí era Señor del Mundo." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 47.

[15] "Tiene mas de 30 Príncipes á sí subjectos, que cada uno dellos tiene cient mill hombres é mas de pelea." (Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 1.) This marvellous tale is gravely repeated by more than one Spanish writer, in their accounts of the Aztec monarchy, not as the assertion of this chief, but as a veritable piece of statistics. See, among others, Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 12.—Solís, Conquista, lib. 3, cap. 16.

cut off all communication with the country. Some other things he added, in answer to queries of his guest, in which, as the reader may imagine, the crafty or credulous cacique varnished over the truth with a lively coloring of romance. Whether romance, or reality, the Spaniards could not determine. The particulars they gleaned were not of a kind to tranquillize their minds, and might well have made bolder hearts than theirs pause, ere they advanced. But far from it. "The words which we heard," says the stout old cavalier so often quoted, "however they may have filled us with wonder, made us—such is the temper of the Spaniard—only the more earnest to prove the adventure, desperate as it might appear." [16]

In a further conversation Cortés inquired of the chief whether his country abounded in gold, and intimated a desire to take home some, as specimens, to his sovereign. But the Indian lord declined to give him any, saying it might displease Montezuma. "Should he command it," he added, "my gold, my person, and all I possess, shall be at your disposal." The general did not press the matter further.

The curiosity of the natives was naturally excited by the strange dresses, weapons, horses, and dogs of the Spaniards. Marina, in satisfying their inquiries, took occasion to magnify the prowess of her adopted countrymen, expatiating on their exploits and victories, and stating the extraordinary marks of respect

[16] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 61.—There is a slight ground-swell of glorification in the Captain's narrative, which may provoke a smile,—not a sneer, for it is mingled with too much real courage and simplicity of character.

they had received from Montezuma. This intelligence seems to have had its effect; for soon after the cacique gave the general some curious trinkets of gold, of no great value, indeed, but as a testimony of his good will. He sent him, also, some female slaves to prepare bread for the troops, and supplied the means of refreshment and repose, more important to them, in the present juncture, than all the gold of Mexico.[17]

The Spanish general, as usual, did not neglect the occasion to inculcate the great truths of revelation on his host, and to display the atrocity of the Indian superstitions. The cacique listened with civil but cold indifference. Cortés, finding him unmoved, turned briskly round to his soldiers, exclaiming that now was the time to plant the Cross! They eagerly seconded his pious purpose, and the same scenes might have been enacted as at Cempoalla, with perhaps very different results, had not Father Olmedo, with better judgment, interposed. He represented that to introduce the Cross among the natives, in their present state of ignorance and incredulity, would be to expose the sacred symbol to desecration so soon as the backs of the Spaniards were turned. The only way was to wait patiently the season when more leisure should be afforded to instil into their minds a knowledge of the truth. The sober reasoning of the good father prevailed over the passions of the martial enthusiasts.

It was fortunate for Cortés that Olmedo was not one

[17] For the preceding pages, besides authorities cited in course, see Peter Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 1,—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83,—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 44,—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 26.

of those frantic friars who would have fanned his fiery temper on such occasions into a blaze. It might have had a most disastrous influence on his fortunes; for he held all temporal consequences light in comparison with the great work of conversion, to effect which the unscrupulous mind of the soldier, trained to the stern discipline of the camp, would have employed force whenever fair means were ineffectual.[18] But Olmedo belonged to that class of benevolent missionaries—of whom the Roman Catholic church, to its credit, has furnished many examples—who rely on spiritual weapons for the great work, inculcating those doctrines of love and mercy which can best touch the sensibilities and win the affections of their rude audience. These, indeed, are the true weapons of the Church, the weapons employed in the primitive ages, by which it has spread its peaceful banners over the farthest regions of the globe. Such were not the means used by the conquerors of America, who, rather adopting the policy of the victorious Moslems in their early career, carried with them the sword in one hand and the Bible in the other. They imposed obedience in matters of faith, no less than of government, on the vanquished, little heeding whether the conversion were genuine, so that it conformed to the outward observances of the Church. Yet the seeds thus recklessly scattered must have perished but for the missionaries of their own nation, who,

[18] The general clearly belonged to the church militant, mentioned by Butler:

> "Such as do build their faith upon
> The holy text of pike and gun,
> And prove their doctrines orthodox
> By apostolic blows and knocks."

in later times, worked over the same ground, living among the Indians as brethren, and, by long and patient culture, enabling the germs of truth to take root and fructify in their hearts.

The Spanish commander remained in the city four or five days, to recruit his fatigued and famished forces; and the modern Indians still point out, or did, at the close of the last century, a venerable cypress, under the branches of which was tied the horse of the *Conquistador*,—the Conqueror, as Cortés was styled, *par excellence*.[19] Their route now opened on a broad and verdant valley, watered by a noble stream,—a circumstance of not too frequent occurrence on the parched table-land of New Spain. The soil was well protected by woods,—a thing still rarer at the present day; since the invaders, soon after the Conquest, swept away the magnificent growth of timber, rivalling that of our Southern and Western States in variety and beauty, which covered the plateau under the Aztecs.[20]

All along the river, on both sides of it, an unbroken line of Indian dwellings, "so near as almost to touch one another," extended for three or four leagues; arguing a population much denser than at present.[21]

[19] "Arbol grande, dicho *ahuehuete*." (Viaje, ap. Lorenzana, p. iii.) The *cupressus disticha* of Linnæus. See Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 54, note.

[20] It is the same taste which has made the Castiles, the table-land of the Peninsula, so naked of wood. Prudential reasons, as well as taste, however, seem to have operated in New Spain. A friend of mine on a visit to a noble *hacienda*, but uncommonly barren of trees, was informed by the proprietor that they were cut down to prevent the lazy Indians on the plantation from wasting their time by loitering in their shade!

[21] It confirms the observations of M. de Humboldt. "Sans doute

On a rough and rising ground stood a town that might contain five or six thousand inhabitants, commanded by a fortress, which, with its walls and trenches, seemed to the Spaniards quite "on a level with similar works in Europe." Here the troops again halted, and met with friendly treatment.[22]

Cortés now determined his future line of march. At the last place he had been counselled by the natives to take the route of the ancient city of Cholula, the inhabitants of which, subjects of Montezuma, were a mild race, devoted to mechanical and other peaceful arts, and would be likely to entertain him kindly. Their Cempoallan allies, however, advised the Spaniards not to trust the Cholulans, "a false and perfidious people," but to take the road to Tlascala, that valiant little republic which had so long maintained its independence against the arms of Mexico. The people were frank as they were fearless, and fair in their dealings. They had always been on terms of amity with the Totonacs, which afforded a strong guarantee for their amicable disposition on the present occasion.

lors de la première arrivée des Espagnols, toute cette côte, depuis la rivière de Papaloapan (Alvarado) jusqu'à Huaxtecapan, était plus habitée et mieux cultivée qu'elle ne l'est aujourd'hui. Cependant à mesure que les conquérans montèrent au plateau, ils trouvèrent les villages plus rapprochés les uns des autres, les champs divisés en portions plus petites, le peuple plus policé." Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 202.

[22] The correct Indian name of the town, *Yxtacamaxtitlan*, *Yxtacmastitan* of Cortés, will hardly be recognized in the *Xalacingo* of Diaz. The town was removed, in 1601, from the top of the hill to the plain. On the original site are still visible remains of carved stones of large dimensions, attesting the elegance of the ancient fortress or palace of the cacique. Viaje, ap. Lorenzana, p. v.

The arguments of his Indian allies prevailed with the Spanish commander, who resolved to propitiate the good will of the Tlascalans by an embassy. He selected four of the principal Cempoallans for this, and sent by them a martial gift,—a cap of crimson cloth, together with a sword and a cross-bow, weapons which, it was observed, excited general admiration among the natives. He added a letter, in which he asked permission to pass through their country. He expressed his admiration of the valor of the Tlascalans, and of their long resistance to the Aztecs, whose proud empire he designed to humble.[23] It was not to be expected that this epistle, indited in good Castilian, would be very intelligible to the Tlascalans. But Cortés communicated its import to the ambassadors. Its mysterious characters might impress the natives with an idea of superior intelligence, and the letter serve instead of those hieroglyphical missives which formed the usual credentials of an Indian ambassador.[24]

The Spaniards remained three days in this hospitable place, after the departure of the envoys, when they resumed their progress. Although in a friendly country, they marched always as if in a land of enemies, the horse and light troops in the van, with the heavy-armed and baggage in the rear, all in battle-array. They were never without their armor, waking or sleeping, lying down with their weapons by their sides. This unintermitting and restless vigilance was,

[23] "Estas cosas y otras de gran persuasion contenia la carta, pero como no sabian leer no pudiéron entender lo que contenia." Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

[24] For an account of the diplomatic usages of the people of Anahuac, see *ante*, p. 45.

perhaps, more oppressive to the spirits than even bodily fatigue. But they were confident in their superiority in a fair field, and felt that the most serious danger they had to fear from Indian warfare was surprise. "We are few against many, brave companions," Cortés would say to them; "be prepared, then, not as if you were going to battle, but as if actually in the midst of it!" [25]

The road taken by the Spaniards was the same which at present leads to Tlascala; not that, however, usually followed in passing from Vera Cruz to the capital, which makes a circuit considerably to the south, towards Puebla, in the neighborhood of the ancient Cholula. They more than once forded the stream that rolls through this beautiful plain, lingering several days on the way, in hopes of receiving an answer from the Indian republic. The unexpected delay of the messengers could not be explained, and occasioned some uneasiness.

As they advanced into a country of rougher and bolder features, their progress was suddenly arrested by a remarkable fortification. It was a stone wall nine feet in height, and twenty in thickness, with a parapet, a foot and a half broad, raised on the summit for the protection of those who defended it. It had only one opening, in the centre, made by two semicircular lines of wall overlapping each other for the space of forty paces, and affording a passage-way between, ten paces wide, so contrived, therefore, as to be perfectly commanded by the inner wall. This fortification, which

[25] "Mira, señores compañeros, ya veis que somos pocos, hemos de estar siempre tan apercebidos, y aparejados, como si aora viessemos venir los contrarios á pelear, y no solamente vellos venir, sino hazer cuenta que estamos ya en la batalla con ellos." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 62.

extended more than two leagues, rested at either end on the bold natural buttresses formed by the sierra. The work was built of immense blocks of stones nicely laid together without cement;[26] and the remains still existing, among which are rocks of the whole breadth of the rampart, fully attest its solidity and size.[27]

This singular structure marked the limits of Tlascala, and was intended, as the natives told the Spaniards, as a barrier against the Mexican invasions. The army paused, filled with amazement at the contemplation of this Cyclopean monument, which naturally suggested reflections on the strength and resources of the people who had raised it. It caused them, too, some painful solicitude as to the probable result of their mission to Tlascala, and their own consequent reception there. But they were too sanguine to allow such uncomfortable surmises long to dwell in their minds. Cortés put himself at the head of his cavalry, and, calling out, "Forward, soldiers, the Holy Cross is our banner, and under that we shall conquer," led his little army through the undefended passage, and in a few moments they trod the soil of the free republic of Tlascala.[28]

[26] According to the writer last cited, the stones were held by a cement so hard that the men could scarcely break it with their pikes. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 62.) But the contrary statement, in the general's letter, is confirmed by the present appearance of the wall. Viaje, ap. Lorenzana, p. vii.

[27] Viaje, ap. Lorenzana, p. vii.—The attempts of the Archbishop to identify the route of Cortés have been very successful. It is a pity that his map illustrating the itinerary should be so worthless.

[28] Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 44, 45. —Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 3.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 2. —Peter Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 1.

CHAPTER II.

REPUBLIC OF TLASCALA. — ITS INSTITUTIONS. — EARLY HISTORY. — DISCUSSIONS IN THE SENATE. — DESPERATE BATTLES.

1519.

BEFORE advancing further with the Spaniards into the territory of Tlascala, it will be well to notice some traits in the character and institutions of the nation, in many respects the most remarkable in Anahuac. The Tlascalans belonged to the same great family with the Aztecs.[1] They came on the grand plateau about the same time with the kindred races, at the close of the twelfth century, and planted themselves on the western borders of the lake of Tezcuco. Here they remained many years, engaged in the usual pursuits of a bold and partially civilized people. From some cause or other, perhaps their turbulent temper, they incurred the enmity of surrounding tribes. A coalition was formed against them; and a bloody battle was fought on the plains of Poyauhtlan, in which the Tlascalans were completely victorious.

[1] The Indian chronicler, Camargo, considers his nation a branch of the Chichimec. (Hist. de Tlascala, MS.) So, also, Torquemada. (Monarch. Ind., lib. 3, cap. 9.) Clavigero, who has carefully investigated the antiquities of Anahuac, calls it one of the seven Nahuatlac tribes. (Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 153, nota.) The fact is not of great moment, since they were all cognate races, speaking the same tongue, and, probably, migrated from their country in the far North at nearly the same time.

Disgusted, however, with their residence among nations with whom they found so little favor, the conquering people resolved to migrate. They separated into three divisions, the largest of which, taking a southern course by the great *volcan* of Mexico, wound round the ancient city of Cholula, and finally settled in the district of country overshadowed by the sierra of Tlascala. The warm and fruitful valleys, locked up in the embraces of this rugged brotherhood of mountains, afforded means of subsistence for an agricultural people, while the bold eminences of the sierra presented secure positions for their towns.

After the lapse of years, the institutions of the nation underwent an important change. The monarchy was divided first into two, afterwards into four separate states, bound together by a sort of federal compact, probably not very nicely defined. Each state, however, had its lord or supreme chief, independent in his own territories, and possessed of co-ordinate authority with the others in all matters concerning the whole republic. The affairs of government, especially all those relating to peace and war, were settled in a senate or council, consisting of the four lords with their inferior nobles.

The lower dignitaries held of the superior, each in his own district, by a kind of feudal tenure, being bound to supply his table and enable him to maintain his state in peace, as well as to serve him in war.[2] In

[2] The descendants of these petty nobles attached as great value to their pedigrees as any Biscayan or Asturian in Old Spain. Long after the Conquest, they refused, however needy, to dishonor their birth by resorting to mechanical or other plebeian occupations, *oficios viles y bajos*. "Los descendientes de estos son estimados por hombres calificados, que aunque sean pobrísimos no usan oficios mecánicos ni

return, he experienced the aid and protection of his suzerain. The same mutual obligations existed between him and the followers among whom his own territories were distributed.[3] Thus a chain of feudal dependencies was established, which, if not contrived with all the art and legal refinements of analogous institutions in the Old World, displayed their most prominent characteristics in its personal relations, the obligations of military service on the one hand, and protection on the other. This form of government, so different from that of the surrounding nations, subsisted till the arrival of the Spaniards. And it is certainly evidence of considerable civilization that so complex a polity should have so long continued, undisturbed by violence or faction in the confederate states, and should have been found competent to protect the people in their rights, and the country from foreign invasion.

The lowest order of the people, however, do not seem to have enjoyed higher immunities than under the monarchical governments; and their rank was

tratos bajos ni viles, ni jamas se permiten cargar ni cabar con coas y azadones, diciendo que son hijos Idalgos en que no han de aplicarse á estas cosas soeces y bajas, sino servir en guerras y fronteras, como Idalgos, y morir como hombres peleando." Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

3 "Cualquier Tecuhtli que formaba un Tecalli, que es casa de Mayorazgo, todas aquellas tierras que le caian en suerte de repartimiento, con montes, fuentes, rios, ó lagunas tomase para la casa principal la mayor y mejor suerte ó pagos de tierra, y luego las demas que quedaban se partian por sus soldados amigos y parientes, igualmente, y todos estos están obligados á reconocer la casa mayor y acudir á ella, á alzarla y repararla, y á ser continuos en reconocer á ella de aves, caza, flores, y ramos para el sustento de la casa del Mayorazgo, y el que lo es está obligado á sustentarlos y á regalarlos como amigos de aquella casa y parientes de ella." Ibid., MS.

carefully defined by an appropriate dress, and by their exclusion from the insignia of the aristocratic orders.[4]

The nation, agricultural in its habits, reserved its highest honors, like most other rude—unhappily, also, civilized—nations, for military prowess. Public games were instituted, and prizes decreed to those who excelled in such manly and athletic exercises as might train them for the fatigues of war. Triumphs were granted to the victorious general, who entered the city, leading his spoils and captives in long procession, while his achievements were commemorated in national songs, and his effigy, whether in wood or stone, was erected in the temples. It was truly in the martial spirit of republican Rome.[5]

An institution not unlike knighthood was introduced, very similar to one existing also among the Aztecs. The aspirant to the honors of this barbaric chivalry watched his arms and fasted fifty or sixty days in the temple, then listened to a grave discourse on the duties of his new profession. Various whimsical ceremonies followed, when his arms were restored to him; he was led in solemn procession through the public streets, and the inauguration was concluded by banquets and public rejoicings. The new knight was distinguished henceforth by certain peculiar privileges, as well as by a badge intimating his rank. It is worthy of remark

4 Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

5 "Los grandes recibimientos que hacian á los capitanes que venian y alcanzaban victoria en las guerras, las fiestas y solenidades con que se solenizaban á manera de triunfo, que los metian en andas en su puebla, trayendo consigo á los vencidos; y por eternizar sus hazañas se las cantaban publicamente, y ansí quedaban memoradas y con estatuas que les ponian en los templos." Ibid., MS.

that this honor was not reserved exclusively for military merit, but was the recompense, also, of public services of other kinds, as wisdom in council, or sagacity and success in trade. For trade was held in as high estimation by the Tlascalans as by the other people of Anahuac.[6]

The temperate climate of the table-land furnished the ready means for distant traffic. The fruitfulness of the soil was indicated by the name of the country, —*Tlascala* signifying the "land of bread." Its wide plains, to the slopes of its rocky hills, waved with yellow harvests of maize, and with the bountiful maguey, a plant which, as we have seen, supplied the materials for some important fabrics. With these, as well as the products of agricultural industry, the merchant found his way down the sides of the Cordilleras, wandered over the sunny regions at their base, and brought back the luxuries which nature had denied to his own.[7]

The various arts of civilization kept pace with increasing wealth and public prosperity; at least, these arts were cultivated to the same limited extent, apparently, as among the other people of Anahuac. The Tlascalan tongue, says the national historian, simple as beseemed that of a mountain region, was rough compared with the polished Tezcucan or the popular Aztec

[6] For the whole ceremony of inauguration,—though, as it seems, having especial reference to the merchant-knights,—see Appendix, Part 2, No. 9, where the original is given from Camargo.

[7] "Ha bel paese," says the Anonymous Conqueror, speaking of Tlascala at the time of the invasion, "di pianure et mõtagne, et è provincia popolosa et vi si raccoglie molto pane." Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. p. 308.

dialect, and, therefore, not so well fitted for composition. But the Tlascalans made like proficiency with the kindred nations in the rudiments of science. Their calendar was formed on the same plan. Their religion, their architecture, many of their laws and social usages, were the same, arguing a common origin for all. Their tutelary deity was the same ferocious war-god as that of the Aztecs, though with a different name; their temples, in like manner, were drenched with the blood of human victims, and their boards groaned with the same cannibal repasts.[8]

Though not ambitious of foreign conquest, the prosperity of the Tlascalans, in time, excited the jealousy of their neighbors, and especially of the opulent state of Cholula. Frequent hostilities arose between them, in which the advantage was almost always on the side of the former. A still more formidable foe appeared in later days in the Aztecs, who could ill brook the independence of Tlascala when the surrounding nations had acknowledged, one after another, their influence or their empire. Under the ambitious Axayacatl, they demanded of the Tlascalans the same tribute and obedience rendered by other people of the country. If it were refused, the Aztecs would raze their cities to their foundations, and deliver the land to their enemies.

To this imperious summons, the little republic proudly replied, "Neither they nor their ancestors

[8] A full account of the manners, customs, and domestic policy of Tlascala is given by the national historian, throwing much light on the other states of Anahuac, whose social institutions seem to have been all cast in the same mould.

had ever paid tribute or homage to a foreign power, and never would pay it. If their country was invaded, they knew how to defend it, and would pour out their blood as freely in defence of their freedom now as their fathers did of yore, when they routed the Aztecs on the plains of Poyauhtlan!"[9]

This resolute answer brought on them the forces of the monarchy. A pitched battle followed, and the sturdy republicans were victorious. From this period, hostilities between the two nations continued with more or less activity, but with unsparing ferocity. Every captive was mercilessly sacrificed. The children were trained from the cradle to deadly hatred against the Mexicans; and, even in the brief intervals of war, none of those intermarriages took place between the people of the respective countries, which knit together in social bonds most of the other kindred races of Anahuac.

In this struggle the Tlascalans received an important support in the accession of the Othomis, or Otomies,—as usually spelt by Castilian writers,—a wild and war-like race originally spread over the table-land north of the Mexican Valley. A portion of them obtained a settlement in the republic, and were speedily incorporated in its armies. Their courage and fidelity to the nation of their adoption showed them worthy of trust, and the frontier places were consigned to their keeping. The mountain barriers by which Tlascala is encompassed afforded many strong natural positions for defence against invasion. The country was open

9. Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 70.

towards the east, where a valley, of some six miles in breadth, invited the approach of an enemy. But here it was that the jealous Tlascalans erected the formidable rampart which had excited the admiration of the Spaniards, and which they manned with a garrison of Otomies.

Efforts for their subjugation were renewed on a greater scale after the accession of Montezuma. His victorious arms had spread down the declivities of the Andes to the distant provinces of Vera Paz and Nicaragua,[10] and his haughty spirit was chafed by the opposition of a petty state whose territorial extent did not exceed ten leagues in breadth by fifteen in length.[11] He sent an army against them under the command of a favorite son. His troops were beaten, and his son was slain. The enraged and mortified monarch was roused to still greater preparations. He enlisted the forces of the cities bordering on his enemy, together with those of the empire, and with this formidable army swept over the devoted valleys of Tlascala. But the bold mountaineers withdrew into the recesses of their hills, and, coolly awaiting their opportunity, rushed like a torrent on the invaders, and drove them back, with dreadful slaughter, from their territories.

Still, notwithstanding the advantages gained over the enemy in the field, the Tlascalans were sorely

[10] Camargo (Hist. de Tlascala, MS.) notices the extent of Montezuma's conquests,—a debatable ground for the historian.

[11] Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 3, cap. 16.—Solís says, "The Tlascalan territory was fifty leagues in circumference, ten long, from east to west, and four broad, from north to south." (Conquista de Méjico, lib. 3, cap. 3.) It must have made a curious figure in geometry!

pressed by their long hostilities with a foe so far superior to themselves in numbers and resources. The Aztec armies lay between them and the coast, cutting off all communication with that prolific region, and thus limited their supplies to the products of their own soil and manufacture. For more than half a century they had neither cotton, nor cacao, nor salt. Indeed, their taste had been so far affected by long abstinence from these articles that it required the lapse of several generations after the Conquest to reconcile them to the use of salt at their meals.[12] During the short intervals of war, it is said, the Aztec nobles, in the true spirit of chivalry, sent supplies of these commodities as presents, with many courteous expressions of respect, to the Tlascalan chiefs. This intercourse, we are assured by the Indian chronicler, was unsuspected by the people. Nor did it lead to any further correspondence, he adds, between the parties, prejudicial to the liberties of the republic, "which maintained its customs and good government inviolate, and the worship of its gods."[13]

Such was the condition of Tlascala at the coming of the Spaniards; holding, it might seem, a precarious existence under the shadow of the formidable power

[12] Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

[13] "Los Señores Mejicanos y Tezcucanos en tiempo que ponian treguas por algunas temporadas embiaban á los Señores de Tlaxcalla grandes presentes y dádivas de oro, ropa, y cacao, y sal, y de todas las cosas de que carecian, sin que la gente plebeya lo entendiese, y se saludaban secretamente, guardándose el decoro que se debian; mas con todos estos trabajos la órden de su república jamas se dejaba de gobernar con la rectitud de sus costumbres guardando inviolablemente el culto de sus Dioses." Ibid., MS.

which seemed suspended like an avalanche over her head, but still strong in her own resources, stronger in the indomitable temper of her people; with a reputation established throughout the land for good faith and moderation in peace, for valor in war, while her uncompromising spirit of independence secured the respect even of her enemies. With such qualities of character, and with an animosity sharpened by long, deadly hostility with Mexico, her alliance was obviously of the last importance to the Spaniards, in their present enterprise. It was not easy to secure it.[14]

The Tlascalans had been made acquainted with the advance and victorious career of the Christians, the intelligence of which had spread far and wide over the plateau. But they do not seem to have anticipated the approach of the strangers to their own borders. They were now much embarrassed by the embassy demanding a passage through their territories. The great council was convened, and a considerable difference of opinion prevailed in its members. Some, adopting the popular superstition, supposed the Spaniards might be the white and bearded men foretold by the oracles.[15] At all events, they were the enemies of Mexico, and as such might co-operate with them in their struggle with the empire. Others argued that the strangers could have nothing in common with them. Their march

[14] The Tlascalan chronicler discerns in this deep-rooted hatred of Mexico the hand of Providence, who wrought out of it an important means for subverting the Aztec empire. Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

[15] "Si bien os acordais, como tenemos de nuestra antiguedad como han de venir gentes á la parte donde sale el sol, y que han de emparentar con nosotros, y que hemos de ser todos unos; y que han de ser blancos y barbudos." Ibid., MS.

throughout the land might be tracked by the broken images of the Indian gods and desecrated temples. How did the Tlascalans even know that they were foes to Montezuma? They had received his embassies, accepted his presents, and were now in the company of his vassals on the way to his capital.

These last were the reflections of an aged chief, one of the four who presided over the republic. His name was Xicotencatl. He was nearly blind, having lived, as is said, far beyond the limits of a century.[16] His son, an impetuous young man of the same name with himself, commanded a powerful army of Tlascalan and Otomi warriors, near the eastern frontier. It would be best, the old man said, to fall with this force at once on the Spaniards. If victorious, the latter would then be in their power. If defeated, the senate could disown the act as that of the general, not of the republic.[17] The cunning counsel of the chief found favor with his hearers, though assuredly not in the spirit of chivalry, nor of the good faith for which his countrymen were celebrated. But with an Indian, force and stratagem, courage and deceit, were equally admissible in war, as they were among the barbarians of ancient

[16] To the ripe age of one hundred and forty! if we may credit Camargo. Solís, who confounds this veteran with his son, has put a flourishing harangue in the mouth of the latter, which would be a rare gem of Indian eloquence,—were it not Castilian. Conquista, lib. 2, cap. 16.

[17] Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 3.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 27.—There is sufficient contradiction, as well as obscurity, in the proceedings reported of the council, which it is not easy to reconcile altogether with subsequent events.

Rome.[18] The Cempoallan envoys were to be detained under pretence of assisting at a religious sacrifice.

Meanwhile, Cortés and his gallant band, as stated in the preceding chapter, had arrived before the rocky rampart on the eastern confines of Tlascala. From some cause or other, it was not manned by its Otomi garrison, and the Spaniards passed in, as we have seen, without resistance. Cortés rode at the head of his body of horse, and, ordering the infantry to come on at a quick pace, went forward to reconnoitre. After advancing three or four leagues, he descried a small party of Indians, armed with sword and buckler, in the fashion of the country. They fled at his approach. He made signs for them to halt, but, seeing that they only fled the faster, he and his companions put spurs to their horses, and soon came up with them. The Indians, finding escape impossible, faced round, and, instead of showing the accustomed terror of the natives at the strange and appalling aspect of a mounted trooper, they commenced a furious assault on the cavaliers. The latter, however, were too strong for them, and would have cut their enemy to pieces without much difficulty, when a body of several thousand Indians appeared in sight, coming briskly on to the support of their countrymen.

Cortés, seeing them, despatched one of his party in all haste, to accelerate the march of his infantry. The Indians, after discharging their missiles, fell furiously on the little band of Spaniards. They strove to tear the lances from their grasp, and to drag the riders from the horses. They brought one cavalier to the ground,

[18] "—— Dolus an virtus, quis in hoste requirat?"

who afterwards died of his wounds, and they killed two of the horses, cutting through their necks with their stout broadswords—if we may believe the chronicler—at a blow![19] In the narrative of these campaigns there is sometimes but one step—and that a short one—from history to romance. The loss of the horses, so important and so few in number, was seriously felt by Cortés, who could have better spared the life of the best rider in the troop.

The struggle was a hard one. But the odds were as overwhelming as any recorded by the Spaniards in their own romances, where a handful of knights is arrayed against legions of enemies. The lances of the Christians did terrible execution here also; but they had need of the magic lance of Astolpho, that overturned myriads with a touch, to carry them safe through so unequal a contest. It was with no little satisfaction, therefore, that they beheld their comrades rapidly advancing to their support.

No sooner had the main body reached the field of battle, than, hastily forming, they poured such a volley from their muskets and cross-bows as staggered the enemy. Astounded, rather than intimidated, by the terrible report of the fire-arms, now heard for the first time in these regions, the Indians made no further effort to continue the fight, but drew off in good order, leaving the road open to the Spaniards. The latter, too well satisfied to be rid of the annoyance to care to follow the retreating foe, again held on their way.

[19] "I les matáron dos Caballos, de dos cuchilladas, i segun algunos, que lo viéron, cortáron á cercen de un golpe cada pescueço, con riendas, i todas." Gomara, Crónica, cap. 45.

Their route took them through a country sprinkled over with Indian cottages, amidst flourishing fields of maize and maguey, indicating an industrious and thriving peasantry. They were met here by two Tlascalan envoys, accompanied by two of the Cempoallans. The former, presenting themselves before the general, disavowed the assault on his troops, as an unauthorized act, and assured him of a friendly reception at their capital. Cortés received the communication in a courteous manner, affecting to place more confidence in its good faith than he probably felt.

It was now growing late, and the Spaniards quickened their march, anxious to reach a favorable ground for encampment before nightfall. They found such a spot on the borders of a stream that rolled sluggishly across the plain. A few deserted cottages stood along the banks, and the fatigued and famished soldiers ransacked them in quest of food. All they could find was some tame animals resembling dogs. These they killed and dressed without ceremony, and, garnishing their unsavory repast with the fruit of the *tuna*, the Indian fig, which grew wild in the neighborhood, they contrived to satisfy the cravings of appetite. A careful watch was maintained by Cortés, and companies of a hundred men each relieved each other in mounting guard through the night. But no attack was made. Hostilities by night were contrary to the system of Indian tactics.[20]

[20] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 50.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 62.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 45.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 3, 41.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 10.

By break of day on the following morning, it being the second of September, the troops were under arms. Besides the Spaniards, the whole number of Indian auxiliaries might now amount to three thousand; for Cortés had gathered recruits from the friendly places on his route,—three hundred from the last. After hearing mass, they resumed their march. They moved in close array; the general had previously admonished the men not to lag behind, or wander from the ranks a moment, as stragglers would be sure to be cut off by their stealthy and vigilant enemy. The horsemen rode three abreast, the better to give one another support; and Cortés instructed them in the heat of fight to keep together, and never to charge singly. He taught them how to carry their lances that they might not be wrested from their hands by the Indians, who constantly attempted it. For the same reason, they should avoid giving thrusts, but aim their weapons steadily at the faces of their foes.[21]

They had not proceeded far, when they were met by the two remaining Cempoallan envoys, who with looks of terror informed the general that they had been treacherously seized and confined, in order to be sacrificed at an approaching festival of the Tlascalans, but in the night had succeeded in making their escape. They gave the unwelcome tidings, also, that a large force of the natives was already assembled to oppose the progress of the Spaniards.

Soon after, they came in sight of a body of Indians,

[21] "Que quando rompiessemos por los esquadrones, que lleuassen las lanças por las caras, y no parassen á dar lançadas, porque no les echassen mano dellas." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 62.

about a thousand, apparently, all armed, and brandishing their weapons, as the Christians approached, in token of defiance. Cortés, when he had come within hearing, ordered the interpreters to proclaim that he had no hostile intentions, but wished only to be allowed a passage through their country, which he had entered as a friend. This declaration he commanded the royal notary, Godoy, to record on the spot, that, if blood were shed, it might not be charged on the Spaniards. This pacific proclamation was met, as usual on such occasions, by a shower of darts, stones, and arrows, which fell like rain on the Spaniards, rattling on their stout harness, and in some instances penetrating to the skin. Galled by the smart of their wounds, they called on the general to lead them on, till he sounded the well-known battle-cry, "St. Jago, and at them!"[22]

The Indians maintained their ground for a while with spirit, when they retreated with precipitation, but not in disorder.[23] The Spaniards, whose blood was heated by the encounter, followed up their advantage with more zeal than prudence, suffering the wily enemy to draw them into a narrow glen or defile intersected by a little stream of water, where the broken ground was impracticable for artillery, as well as for the movements of cavalry. Pressing forward with eagerness, to extricate themselves from their perilous position, to their great dismay, on turning an abrupt angle of

[22] "Entonces dixo Cortés, 'Santiago, y á ellos.'" Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 63.

[23] "Una gentil contienda," says Gomara of this skirmish. Crónica, cap. 46.

the pass, they came in presence of a numerous army, choking up the gorge of the valley, and stretching far over the plains beyond. To the astonished eyes of Cortés, they appeared a hundred thousand men, while no account estimates them at less than thirty thousand.[24]

They presented a confused assemblage of helmets, weapons, and many-colored plumes, glancing bright in the morning sun, and mingled with banners, above which proudly floated one that bore as a device the heron on a rock. It was the well-known ensign of the house of Titcala, and, as well as the white and yellow stripes on the bodies, and the like colors on the feather-mail of the Indians, showed that they were the warriors of Xicotencatl.[25]

As the Spaniards came in sight, the Tlascalans set up a hideous war-cry, or rather whistle, piercing the ear with its shrillness, and which, with the beat of their

[24] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 51. According to Gomara (Crónica, cap. 46), the enemy mustered 80,000. So, also, Ixtlilxochitl. (Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83.) Bernal Diaz says, more than 40,000. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 63.) But Herrera (Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 5) and Torquemada (Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 20) reduce them to 30,000. One might as easily reckon the leaves in a forest, as the numbers of a confused throng of barbarians. As this was only one of several armies kept on foot by the Tlascalans, the smallest amount is, probably, too large. The whole population of the state, according to Clavigero, who would not be likely to underrate it, did not exceed half a million at the time of the invasion. Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 156.

[25] "La divisa y armas de la casa y cabecera de Titcala es una garga blanca sobre un peñasco." (Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.) "El capitan general," says Bernal Diaz, "que se dezia Xicotenga, y con sus diuisas de blanco y colorado, porque aquella diuisa y librea era de aquel Xicotenga." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 63.

melancholy drums, that could be heard for half a league or more,[26] might well have filled the stoutest heart with dismay. This formidable host came rolling on towards the Christians, as if to overwhelm them by their very numbers. But the courageous band of warriors, closely serried together and sheltered under their strong panoplies, received the shock unshaken, while the broken masses of the enemy, chafing and heaving tumultuously around them, seemed to recede only to return with new and accumulated force.

Cortés, as usual, in the front of danger, in vain endeavored, at the head of the horse, to open a passage for the infantry. Still his men, both cavalry and foot, kept their array unbroken, offering no assailable point to their foe. A body of the Tlascalans, however, acting in concert, assaulted a soldier named Moran, one of the best riders in the troop. They succeeded in dragging him from his horse, which they despatched with a thousand blows. The Spaniards, on foot, made a desperate effort to rescue their comrade from the hands of the enemy,—and from the horrible doom of the captive. A fierce struggle now began over the body of the prostrate horse. Ten of the Spaniards were wounded, when they succeeded in retrieving the unfortunate cavalier from his assailants, but in so disastrous a plight that he died on the following day.

[26] "Llaman Teponaztle ques de un trozo de madero concavado y de una pieza rollizo y, como decimos, hueco por de dentro, que suena algunas veces mas de media legua y con el atambor hace estraña y suave consonancia." (Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.) Clavigero, who gives a drawing of this same drum, says it is still used by the Indians, and may be heard two or three miles. Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 179.

The horse was borne off in triumph by the Indians, and his mangled remains were sent, a strange trophy. to the different towns of Tlascala. The circumstance troubled the Spanish commander, as it divested the animal of the supernatural terrors with which the superstition of the natives had usually surrounded it. To prevent such a consequence, he had caused the two horses, killed on the preceding day, to be secretly buried on the spot.

The enemy now began to give ground gradually, borne down by the riders, and trampled under the hoofs of their horses. Through the whole of this sharp encounter the Indian allies were of great service to the Spaniards. They rushed into the water, and grappled their enemies, with the desperation of men who felt that "their only safety was in the despair of safety."[27] "I see nothing but death for us," exclaimed a Cempoallan chief to Marina; "we shall never get through the pass alive." "The God of the Christians is with us," answered the intrepid woman; "and He will carry us safely through."[28]

Amidst the din of battle, the voice of Cortés was heard, cheering on his soldiers. "If we fail now," he cried, "the Cross of Christ can never be planted in the land. Forward, comrades! When was it ever known that a Castilian turned his back on a foe?"[29]

[27] "Una illis fuit spes salutis, desperâsse de salute." (P. Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 1, cap. 1.) It is said with the classic energy of Tacitus.

[28] "Respondióle Marina, que no tuviese miedo, porque el Dios de los Christianos, que es muy poderoso, i los queria mucho, los sacaria de peligro." Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 5.

[29] Ibid., ubi supra.

Animated by the words and heroic bearing of their general, the soldiers, with desperate efforts, at length succeeded in forcing a passage through the dark columns of the enemy, and emerged from the defile on the open plain beyond.

Here they quickly recovered their confidence with their superiority. The horse soon opened a space for the manœuvres of the artillery. The close files of their antagonists presented a sure mark; and the thunders of the ordnance vomiting forth torrents of fire and sulphurous smoke, the wide desolation caused in their ranks, and the strangely mangled carcasses of the slain, filled the barbarians with consternation and horror. They had no weapons to cope with these terrible engines, and their clumsy missiles, discharged from uncertain hands, seemed to fall ineffectual on the charmed heads of the Christians. What added to their embarrassment was, the desire to carry off the dead and wounded from the field, a general practice among the people of Anahuac, but one which necessarily exposed them, while thus employed, to still greater loss.

Eight of their principal chiefs had now fallen, and Xicotencatl, finding himself wholly unable to make head against the Spaniards in the open field, ordered a retreat. Far from the confusion of a panic-struck mob, so common among barbarians, the Tlascalan force moved off the ground with all the order of a well-disciplined army. Cortés, as on the preceding day, was too well satisfied with his present advantage to desire to follow it up. It was within an hour of sunset, and he was anxious before nightfall to secure a

good position, where he might refresh his wounded troops and bivouac for the night.[30]

Gathering up his wounded, he held on his way, without loss of time, and before dusk reached a rocky eminence, called *Tzompachtepetl*, or "the hill of Tzompach." It was crowned by a sort of tower or temple, the remains of which are still visible.[31] His first care was given to the wounded, both men and horses. Fortunately, an abundance of provisions was found in some neighboring cottages; and the soldiers, at least all who were not disabled by their injuries, celebrated the victory of the day with feasting and rejoicing.

As to the number of killed or wounded on either side, it is matter of loosest conjecture. The Indians must have suffered severely, but the practice of carrying off the dead from the field made it impossible to know to what extent. The injury sustained by the Spaniards appears to have been principally in the number of their wounded. The great object of the natives of Anahuac in their battles was to make prisoners, who might grace their triumphs and supply victims for sacrifice. To this brutal superstition the Christians were indebted, in no slight degree, for their personal preservation. To take the reports of the Conquerors, their own losses in action were always inconsiderable. But whoever has had occasion to consult the ancient chroniclers of Spain in relation to its wars with the

[30] Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 3, 45.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 51.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 63.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 40.

[31] Viaje de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. ix.

infidel, whether Arab or American, will place little confidence in numbers.[32]

The events of the day had suggested many topics for painful reflection to Cortés. He had nowhere met with so determined a resistance within the borders of Anahuac; nowhere had he encountered native troops so formidable for their weapons, their discipline, and their valor. Far from manifesting the superstitious terrors felt by the other Indians at the strange arms and aspect of the Spaniards, the Tlascalans had boldly grappled with their enemy, and only yielded to the inevitable superiority of his military science. How important would the alliance of such a nation be in a struggle with those of their own race,—for example, with the Aztecs! But how was he to secure this alliance? Hitherto, all overtures had been rejected with disdain; and it seemed probable that every step of his progress in this populous land was to be fiercely contested. His army, especially the Indians, celebrated the events of the day with feasting and dancing, songs of merriment, and shouts of triumph. Cortés encouraged it, well knowing how important it was to keep up the spirits of his soldiers. But the sounds of

[32] According to Cortés, not a Spaniard fell—though many were wounded—in this action so fatal to the infidel! Diaz allows one. In the famous battle of Navas de Tolosa, between the Spaniards and Arabs, in 1212, equally matched in military science at that time, there were left 200,000 of the latter on the field; and, to balance this bloody roll, only five-and-twenty Christians! See the estimate in Alfonso IX.'s veracious letter, ap. Mariana (Hist. de España, lib. 2, cap. 24). The official returns of the old Castilian crusaders, whether in the Old World or the New, are scarcely more trustworthy than a French *imperial* bulletin in our day.

revelry at length died away; and, in the still watches of the night, many an anxious thought must have crowded on the mind of the general, while his little army lay buried in slumber in its encampment around the Indian hill.

CHAPTER III.

DECISIVE VICTORY.—INDIAN COUNCIL.—NIGHT-ATTACK. —NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE ENEMY.—TLASCALAN HERO.

1519.

THE Spaniards were allowed to repose undisturbed the following day, and to recruit their strength after the fatigue and hard fighting of the preceding. They found sufficient employment, however, in repairing and cleaning their weapons, replenishing their diminished stock of arrows, and getting everything in order for further hostilities, should the severe lesson they had inflicted on the enemy prove insufficient to discourage him. On the second day, as Cortés received no overtures from the Tlascalans, he determined to send an embassy to their camp, proposing a cessation of hostilities, and expressing his intention to visit their capital as a friend. He selected two of the principal chiefs taken in the late engagement, as the bearers of the message.

Meanwhile, averse to leaving his men longer in a dangerous state of inaction, which the enemy might interpret as the result of timidity or exhaustion, he put himself at the head of the cavalry and such light troops as were most fit for service, and made a foray into the neighboring country. It was a mountainous region, formed by a ramification of the great sierra of

Tlascala, with verdant slopes and valleys teeming with maize and plantations of maguey, while the eminences were crowned with populous towns and villages. In one of these, he tells us, he found three thousand dwellings.[1] In some places he met with a resolute resistance, and on these occasions took ample vengeance by laying the country waste with fire and sword. After a successful inroad he returned laden with forage and provisions and driving before him several hundred Indian captives. He treated them kindly, however, when arrived in camp, endeavoring to make them understand that these acts of violence were not dictated by his own wishes, but by the unfriendly policy of their countrymen. In this way he hoped to impress the nation with the conviction of his power on the one hand, and of his amicable intentions, if met by them in the like spirit, on the other.

On reaching his quarters, he found the two envoys returned from the Tlascalan camp. They had fallen in with Xicotencatl at about two leagues' distance, where he lay encamped with a powerful force. The cacique gave them audience at the head of his troops. He told them to return with the answer, "that the Spaniards might pass on as soon as they chose to Tlascala; and, when they reached it, their flesh would be hewn from their bodies, for sacrifice to the gods! If

[1] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 52.—Oviedo, who made free use of the manuscripts of Cortés, writes thirty-nine houses. (Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 3.) This may perhaps be explained by the sign for a thousand, in Spanish notation, bearing great resemblance to the figure 9. Martyr, who had access, also, to the Conqueror's manuscript, confirms the larger and, *a priori*, less probable number.

they preferred to remain in their own quarters, he would pay them a visit there the next day."[2] The ambassadors added that the chief had an immense force with him, consisting of five battalions of ten thousand men each. They were the flower of the Tlascalan and Otomi warriors, assembled under the banners of their respective leaders, by command of the senate, who were resolved to try the fortunes of the state in a pitched battle and strike one decisive blow for the extermination of the invaders.[3]

This bold defiance fell heavily on the ears of the Spaniards, not prepared for so pertinacious a spirit in their enemy. They had had ample proof of his courage and formidable prowess. They were now, in their crippled condition, to encounter him with a still more terrible array of numbers. The war, too, from the horrible fate with which it menaced the vanquished, wore a peculiarly gloomy aspect, that pressed heavily on their spirits. "We feared death," says the lion-hearted Diaz, with his usual simplicity, "for we were men." There was scarcely one in the army that did not confess himself that night to the reverend Father Olmedo, who was occupied nearly the whole of it with

[2] "Que fuessemos á su pueblo adonde está su padre, q̃ allá harian las pazes cõ hartarse de nuestras carnes, y honrar sus dioses con nuestros coraçones, y sangre, é que para otro dia de mañana veriamos su respuesta." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 64.

[3] More than one writer repeats a story of the Tlascalan general's sending a good supply of provisions, at this time, to the famished army of the Spaniards; to put them in stomach, it may be, for the fight. (Gomara, Crónica, cap. 46.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83.) This ultra-chivalrous display from the barbarian is not very probable, and Cortés' own account of his successful foray may much better explain the abundance which reigned in his camp.

administering absolution, and with the other solemn offices of the Church. Armed with the blessed sacraments, the Catholic soldier lay tranquilly down to rest, prepared for any fate that might betide him under the banner of the Cross.[4]

As a battle was now inevitable, Cortés resolved to march out and meet the enemy in the field. This would have a show of confidence that might serve the double purpose of intimidating the Tlascalans and inspiriting his own men, whose enthusiasm might lose somewhat of its heat if compelled to await the assault of their antagonists, inactive in their own intrenchments. The sun rose bright on the following morning, the fifth of September, 1519, an eventful day in the history of the Spanish Conquest. The general reviewed his army, and gave them, preparatory to marching, a few words of encouragement and advice. The infantry he instructed to rely on the point rather than the edge of their swords, and to endeavor to thrust their opponents through the body. The horsemen were to charge at half speed, with their lances aimed at the eyes of the Indians. The artillery, the arquebusiers, and crossbowmen were to support one another, some loading while others discharged their pieces, that there should be an unintermitted firing kept up through the action. Above all, they were to maintain their ranks close and unbroken, as on this depended their preservation.

[4] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 52.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 46, 47.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 3.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 64.

They had not advanced a quarter of a league, when they came in sight of the Tlascalan army. Its dense array stretched far and wide over a vast plain or meadow-ground about six miles square. Its appearance justified the report which had been given of its numbers.[5] Nothing could be more picturesque than the aspect of these Indian battalions, with the naked bodies of the common soldiers gaudily painted, the fantastic helmets of the chiefs glittering with gold and precious stones, and the glowing panoplies of feather-work which decorated their persons.[6] Innumerable spears and darts, tipped with points of transparent *itztli* or fiery copper, sparkled bright in the morning sun, like the phosphoric gleams playing on the surface of a troubled sea, while the rear of the mighty host was dark with the shadows of banners, on which were emblazoned the armorial bearings of the great Tlas-

5 Through the magnifying lens of Cortés, there appeared to be 150,000 men (Rel. Seg., ap. Lorenzana, p. 52); a number usually preferred by succeeding writers.

6 "Not half so gorgeous, for their May-day mirth
All wreathed and ribanded, our youths and maids,
As these stern *Tlascalans* in war attire!
The golden glitterance, and the feather-mail
More gay than glittering gold; and round the helm
A coronal of high upstanding plumes,
Green as the spring grass in a sunny shower;
Or scarlet bright, as in the wintry wood
The clustered holly; or of purple tint;
Whereto shall that be likened? to what gem
Indiademed, what flower, what insect's wing?
With war-songs and wild music they came on;
We, the while kneeling, raised with one accord
The hymn of supplication."

SOUTHEY'S Madoc, Part 1, canto 7.

calan and Otomi chieftains.[7] Among these, the white heron on the rock, the cognizance of the house of Xicotencatl, was conspicuous, and, still more, the golden eagle with outspread wings, in the fashion of a Roman *signum*, richly ornamented with emeralds and silver-work, the great standard of the republic of Tlascala.[8]

The common file wore no covering except a girdle round the loins. Their bodies were painted with the appropriate colors of the chieftain whose banner they followed. The feather-mail of the higher class of warriors exhibited, also, a similar selection of colors for the like object, in the same manner as the color of the tartan indicates the peculiar clan of the Highlander.[9]

[7] The standards of the Mexicans were carried in the centre, those of the Tlascalans in the rear of the army. (Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, vol. ii. p. 145.) According to the Anonymous Conqueror, the banner-staff was attached to the back of the ensign, so that it was impossible to be torn away. "Ha ogni cõpagnia il suo Alfiere con la sua insegna inhastata, et in tal modo ligata sopra le spalle, che non gli da alcun disturbo di poter combattere ne far ció che vuole, et la porta cosi ligata bene al corpo, che se nõ fanno del suo corpo pezzi, non se gli puo sligare, ne torgliela mai." Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 305.

[8] Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 6.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 46.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 64.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 45. —The last two authors speak of the device of "a white bird like an ostrich," as that of the republic. They have evidently confounded it with that of the Indian general. Camargo, who has given the heraldic emblems of the four great families of Tlascala, notices the white heron as that of Xicotencatl.

[9] The accounts of the Tlascalan chronicler are confirmed by the Anonymous Conqueror and by Bernal Diaz, both eyewitnesses; though the latter frankly declares that had he not seen them with his own eyes he should never have credited the existence of orders and

The caciques and principal warriors were clothed in quilted cotton tunics, two inches thick, which, fitting close to the body, protected also the thighs and the shoulders. Over these the wealthier Indians wore cuirasses of thin gold plate, or silver. Their legs were defended by leathern boots or sandals, trimmed with gold. But the most brilliant part of their costume was a rich mantle of the *plumaje* or feather-work, embroidered with curious art, and furnishing some resemblance to the gorgeous surcoat worn by the European knight over his armor in the Middle Ages. This graceful and picturesque dress was surmounted by a fantastic head-piece made of wood or leather, representing the head of some wild animal, and frequently displaying a formidable array of teeth. With this covering the warrior's head was enveloped, producing a most grotesque and hideous effect.[10] From the crown floated a splèndid panache of the richly variegated plumage of the tropics, indicating, by its form and colors, the rank and family of the wearer. To complete their defensive armor, they carried shields or targets, made sometimes of wood covered with leather, but more usually of a light frame of reeds quilted with cotton, which were preferred, as tougher and less liable

badges among the barbarians, like those found among the civilized nations of Europe. Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 64, et alibi.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 305.

[10] "Portano in testa," says the Anonymous Conqueror, "per difesa una cosa come teste di serpēti, ò di tigri, ò di leoni, ò di lupi, che ha le mascelle, et è la testa dell' huomo messa nella testa di q̃sto animale come se lo volesse diuorare: sono di legno, et sopra vi é la pēna, et di piastra d'oro et di pietre preciose copte, che è cosa marauigliosa da vedere." Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 305.

to fracture than the former. They had other bucklers, in which the cotton was covered with an elastic substance, enabling them to be shut up in a more compact form, like a fan or umbrella. These shields were decorated with showy ornaments, according to the taste or wealth of the wearer, and fringed with a beautiful pendant of feather-work.

Their weapons were slings, bows and arrows, javelins, and darts. They were accomplished archers, and would discharge two or even three arrows at a time. But they most excelled in throwing the javelin. One species of this, with a thong attached to it, which remained in the slinger's hand, that he might recall the weapon, was especially dreaded by the Spaniards. These various weapons were pointed with bone, or the mineral *itztli* (obsidian), the hard vitreous substance already noticed as capable of taking an edge like a razor, though easily blunted. Their spears and arrows were also frequently headed with copper. Instead of a sword, they bore a two-handed staff, about three feet and a half long, in which, at regular distances, were inserted, transversely, sharp blades of *itztli*,—a formidable weapon, which, an eyewitness assures us, he had seen fell a horse at a blow.[11]

Such was the costume of the Tlascalan warrior, and, indeed, of that great family of nations generally who occupied the plateau of Anahuac. Some parts of it, as

[11] "I saw one day an Indian make a thrust at the horse of a cavalier with whom he was fighting, which pierced its breast, and penetrated so deep that it immediately fell dead; and the same day I saw another Indian cut the neck of a horse, which fell dead at his feet." Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 305.

the targets and the cotton mail, or *escaupil*, as it was called in Castilian, were so excellent that they were subsequently adopted by the Spaniards, as equally effectual in the way of protection, and superior on the score of lightness and convenience to their own. They were of sufficient strength to turn an arrow or the stroke of a javelin, although impotent as a defence against fire-arms. But what armor is not? Yet it is probably no exaggeration to say that, in convenience, gracefulness, and strength, the arms of the Indian warrior were not very inferior to those of the polished nations of antiquity.[12]

As soon as the Castilians came in sight, the Tlascalans set up their yell of defiance, rising high above the wild barbaric minstrelsy of shell, atabal, and trumpet, with which they proclaimed their triumphant anticipations of victory over the paltry forces of the invaders. When the latter had come within bowshot, the Indians hurled a tempest of missiles, that darkened the sun for a moment as with a passing cloud, strewing the earth around with heaps of stones and arrows.[13] Slowly and steadily the little band of Spaniards held on its way amidst this arrowy shower, until it had reached what appeared the proper distance for delivering its fire with full effect. Cortés then halted, and,

[12] Particular notices of the military dress and appointments of the American tribes on the plateau may be found in Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.,—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 101, et seq.,—Acosta, lib. 6, cap. 26,—Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 305, et auct. al.

[13] "Que granizo de piedra de los honderos! Pues flechas todo el suelo hecho parva de varas todas de á dos gajos, que passan qualquiera arma, y las entrañas adonde no ay defensa." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 65.

hastily forming his troops, opened a general well-directed fire along the whole line. Every shot bore its errand of death; and the ranks of the Indians were mowed down faster than their comrades in the rear could carry off their bodies, according to custom, from the field. The balls in their passage through the crowded files, bearing splinters of the broken harness and mangled limbs of the warriors, scattered havoc and desolation in their path. The mob of barbarians stood petrified with dismay, till at length, galled to desperation by their intolerable suffering, they poured forth simultaneously their hideous war-shriek and rushed impetuously on the Christians.

On they came like an avalanche, or mountain torrent, shaking the solid earth and sweeping away every obstacle in its path. The little army of Spaniards opposed a bold front to the overwhelming mass. But no strength could withstand it. They faltered, gave way, were borne along before it, and their ranks were broken and thrown into disorder. It was in vain the general called on them to close again and rally. His voice was drowned by the din of fight and the fierce cries of the assailants. For a moment, it seemed that all was lost. The tide of battle had turned against them, and the fate of the Christians was sealed.

But every man had that within his bosom which spoke louder than the voice of the general. Despair gave unnatural energy to his arm. The naked body of the Indian afforded no resistance to the sharp Toledo steel; and with their good swords the Spanish infantry at length succeeded in staying the human torrent. The heavy guns from a distance thundered on the flank

of the assailants, which, shaken by the iron tempest, was thrown into disorder. Their very numbers increased the confusion, as they were precipitated on the masses in front. The horse at the same moment, charging gallantly under Cortés, followed up the advantage, and at length compelled the tumultuous throng to fall back with greater precipitation and disorder than that with which they had advanced.

More than once in the course of the action a similar assault was attempted by the Tlascalans, but each time with less spirit and greater loss. They were too deficient in military science to profit by their vast superiority in numbers. They were distributed into companies, it is true, each serving under its own chieftain and banner. But they were not arranged by rank and file, and moved in a confused mass, promiscuously heaped together. They knew not how to concentrate numbers on a given point, or even how to sustain an assault, by employing successive detachments to support and relieve one another. A very small part only of their array could be brought into contact with an enemy inferior to them in amount of forces. The remainder of the army, inactive and worse than useless, in the rear, served only to press tumultuously on the advance and embarrass its movements by mere weight of numbers, while on the least alarm they were seized with a panic and threw the whole body into inextricable confusion. It was, in short, the combat of the ancient Greeks and Persians over again.

Still, the great numerical superiority of the Indians might have enabled them, at a severe cost of their own lives, indeed, to wear out, in time, the constancy of

the Spaniards, disabled by wounds and incessant fatigue. But, fortunately for the latter, dissensions arose among their enemies. A Tlascalan chieftain, commanding one of the great divisions, had taken umbrage at the haughty demeanor of Xicotencatl, who had charged him with misconduct or cowardice in the late action. The injured cacique challenged his rival to single combat. This did not take place. But, burning with resentment, he chose the present occasion to indulge it, by drawing off his forces, amounting to ten thousand men, from the field. He also persuaded another of the commanders to follow his example.

Thus reduced to about half his original strength, and that greatly crippled by the losses of the day, Xicotencatl could no longer maintain his ground against the Spaniards. After disputing the field with admirable courage for four hours, he retreated and resigned it to the enemy. The Spaniards were too much jaded, and too many were disabled by wounds, to allow them to pursue; and Cortés, satisfied with the decisive victory he had gained, returned in triumph to his position on the hill of Tzompach.

The number of killed in his own ranks had been very small, notwithstanding the severe loss inflicted on the enemy. These few he was careful to bury where they could not be discovered, anxious to conceal not only the amount of the slain, but the fact that the whites were mortal.[14] But very many of the men were wounded,

[14] So says Bernal Diaz; who at the same time, by the epithets *los muertos*, *los cuerpos*, plainly contradicts his previous boast that only one Christian fell in the fight. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 65.) Cortés has not the grace to acknowledge that one.

and all the horses. The trouble of the Spaniards was much enhanced by the want of many articles important to them in their present exigency. They had neither oil nor salt, which, as before noticed, was not to be obtained in Tlascala. Their clothing, accommodated to a softer climate, was ill adapted to the rude air of the mountains; and bows and arrows, as Bernal Diaz sarcastically remarks, formed an indifferent protection against the inclemency of the weather.[15]

Still, they had much to cheer them in the events of the day; and they might draw from them a reasonable ground for confidence in their own resources, such as no other experience could have supplied. Not that the results could authorize anything like contempt for their Indian foe. Singly and with the same weapons, he might have stood his ground against the Spaniard.[16] But the success of the day established the superiority

[15] Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 3.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 52.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 6.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 46.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 32.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 65, 66.—The warm, chivalrous glow of feeling which colors the rude composition of the last chronicler makes him a better painter than his more correct and classical rivals. And, if there is somewhat too much of the self-complacent tone of the *quorum pars magna fui* in his writing, it may be pardoned in the hero of more than a hundred battles and almost as many wounds.

[16] The Anonymous Conqueror bears emphatic testimony to the valor of the Indians, specifying instances in which he had seen a single warrior defend himself for a long time against two, three, and even four Spaniards! "Sono fra loro di valẽtissimi huomini et che ossano morir ostinatissimamẽte. Et io ho veduto un d' essi difendersi valẽtemente da duoi caualli leggieri, et un altro da tre, et quattro." Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 305.

of science and discipline over mere physical courage and numbers. It was fighting over again, as we have said, the old battle of the European and the Asiatic. But the handful of Greeks who routed the hosts of Xerxes and Darius, it must be remembered, had not so obvious an advantage on the score of weapons as was enjoyed by the Spaniards in these wars. The use of fire-arms gave an ascendency which cannot easily be estimated; one so great, that a contest between nations equally civilized, which should be similar in all other respects to that between the Spaniards and the Tlascalans, would probably be attended with a similar issue. To all this must be added the effect produced by the cavalry. The nations of Anahuac had no large domesticated animals, and were unacquainted with any beast of burden. Their imaginations were bewildered when they beheld the strange apparition of the horse and his rider moving in unison and obedient to one impulse, as if possessed of a common nature; and as they saw the terrible animal, with his "neck clothed in thunder," bearing down their squadrons and trampling them in the dust, no wonder they should have regarded him with the mysterious terror felt for a supernatural being. A very little reflection on the manifold grounds of superiority, both moral and physical, possessed by the Spaniards in this contest, will surely explain the issue, without any disparagement to the courage or capacity of their opponents.[17]

[17] The appalling effect of the cavalry on the natives reminds one of the confusion into which the Roman legions were thrown by the strange appearance of the elephants in their first engagements with Pyrrhus, as told by Plutarch in his life of that prince.

Cortés, thinking the occasion favorable, followed up the important blow he had struck by a new mission to the capital, bearing a message of similar import with that recently sent to the camp. But the senate was not yet sufficiently humbled. The late defeat caused, indeed, general consternation. Maxixcatzin, one of the four great lords who presided over the republic, reiterated with greater force the arguments before urged by him for embracing the proffered alliance of the strangers. The armies of the state had been beaten too often to allow any reasonable hope of successful resistance; and he enlarged on the generosity shown by the politic Conqueror to his prisoners—so unusual in Anahuac—as an additional motive for an alliance with men who knew how to be friends as well as foes.

But in these views he was overruled by the war-party, whose animosity was sharpened, rather than subdued, by the late discomfiture. Their hostile feelings were further exasperated by the younger Xicotencatl, who burned for an opportunity to retrieve his disgrace, and to wipe away the stain which had fallen for the first time on the arms of the republic.

In their perplexity they called in the assistance of the priests, whose authority was frequently invoked in the deliberations of the American chiefs. The latter inquired, with some simplicity, of these interpreters of fate, whether the strangers were supernatural beings, or men of flesh and blood like themselves. The priests, after some consultation, are said to have made the strange answer that the Spaniards, though not gods, were children of the Sun, that they derived their strength from that luminary, and when his beams were

withdrawn their powers would also fail. They recommended a night-attack, therefore, as one which afforded the best chance of success. This apparently childish response may have had in it more of cunning than credulity. It was not improbably suggested by Xicotencatl himself, or by the caciques in his interest, to reconcile the people to a measure which was contrary to the military usages—indeed, it may be said, to the public law—of Anahuac. Whether the fruit of artifice or superstition, it prevailed; and the Tlascalan general was empowered, at the head of a detachment of ten thousand warriors, to try the effect of an assault by night on the Christian camp.

The affair was conducted with such secrecy that it did not reach the ears of the Spaniards. But their general was not one who allowed himself, sleeping or waking, to be surprised on his post. Fortunately, the night appointed was illumined by the full beams of an autumnal moon; and one of the vedettes perceived by its light, at a considerable distance, a large body of Indians moving towards the Christian lines. He was not slow in giving the alarm to the garrison.

The Spaniards slept, as has been said, with their arms by their side; while their horses, picketed near them, stood ready saddled, with the bridle hanging at the bow. In five minutes the whole camp was under arms; when they beheld the dusky columns of the Indians cautiously advancing over the plain, their heads just peering above the tall maize with which the land was partially covered. Cortés determined not to abide the assault in his intrenchments, but to sally out and

pounce on the enemy when he had reached the bottom of the hill.

Slowly and stealthily the Indians advanced, while the Christian camp, hushed in profound silence, seemed to them buried in slumber. But no sooner had they reached the slope of the rising ground than they were astounded by the deep battle-cry of the Spaniards, followed by the instantaneous apparition of the whole army, as they sallied forth from the works and poured down the sides of the hill. Brandishing aloft their weapons, they seemed to the troubled fancies of the Tlascalans like so many spectres or demons hurrying to and fro in mid air, while the uncertain light magnified their numbers and expanded the horse and his rider into gigantic and unearthly dimensions.

Scarcely awaiting the shock of their enemy, the panic-struck barbarians let off a feeble volley of arrows, and, offering no other resistance, fled rapidly and tumultuously across the plain. The horse easily overtook the fugitives, riding them down and cutting them to pieces without mercy, until Cortés, weary with slaughter, called off his men, leaving the field loaded with the bloody trophies of victory.[18]

The next day, the Spanish commander, with his usual policy after a decisive blow had been struck, sent a new embassy to the Tlascalan capital. The envoys received their instructions through the interpreter, Marina. That remarkable woman had attracted gen-

[18] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 53, 54.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 3.—P. Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 2, cap. 2.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 32.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 8.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 66.

eral admiration by the constancy and cheerfulness with which she endured all the privations of the camp. Far from betraying the natural weakness and timidity of her sex, she had shrunk from no hardship herself, and had done much to fortify the drooping spirits of the soldiers; while her sympathies, whenever occasion offered, had been actively exerted in mitigating the calamities of her Indian countrymen.[19]

Through his faithful interpreter, Cortés communicated the terms of his message to the Tlascalan envoys. He made the same professions of amity as before, promising oblivion of all past injuries; but, if this proffer were rejected, he would visit their capital as a conqueror, raze every house in it to the ground, and put every inhabitant to the sword! He then dismissed the ambassadors with the symbolical presents of a letter in one hand and an arrow in the other.

The envoys obtained respectful audience from the council of Tlascala, whom they found plunged in deep dejection by their recent reverses. The failure of the night-attack had extinguished every spark of hope in their bosoms. Their armies had been beaten again and again, in the open field and in secret ambush. Stratagem and courage, all their resources, had alike proved ineffectual against a foe whose hand was never weary and whose eye was never closed. Nothing remained but to submit. They selected four principal caciques, whom they intrusted with a mission to the

[19] "Though she heard them every day talk of killing us and eating our flesh, though she had seen us surrounded in past battles, and knew that we were now all of us wounded and suffering, yet we never saw any weakness in her, but a courage far beyond that of woman." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 66.

Christian camp. They were to assure the strangers of a free passage through the country, and a friendly reception in the capital. The proffered friendship of the Spaniards was cordially embraced, with many awkward excuses for the past. The envoys were to touch at the Tlascalan camp on their way, and inform Xicotencatl of their proceedings. They were to require him, at the same time, to abstain from all further hostilities and to furnish the white men with an ample supply of provisions.

But the Tlascalan deputies, on arriving at the quarters of that chief, did not find him in the humor to comply with these instructions. His repeated collisions with the Spaniards, or, it may be, his constitutional courage, left him inaccessible to the vulgar terrors of his countrymen. He regarded the strangers not as supernatural beings, but as men like himself. The animosity of a warrior had rankled into a deadly hatred from the mortifications he had endured at their hands, and his head teemed with plans for recovering his fallen honors and for taking vengeance on the invaders of his country. He refused to disband any of the force, still formidable, under his command, or to send supplies to the enemy's camp. He further induced the ambassadors to remain in his quarters and relinquish their visit to the Spaniards. The latter, in consequence, were kept in ignorance of the movements in their favor which had taken place in the Tlascalan capital.[20]

The conduct of Xicotencatl is condemned by Cas-

[20] Bernal Diaz, Hist de la Conquista, cap. 67.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83.

tilian writers as that of a ferocious and sanguinary barbarian. It is natural they should so regard it. But those who have no national prejudice to warp their judgments may come to a different conclusion. They may find much to admire in that high, unconquerable spirit, like some proud column standing alone in its majesty amidst the fragments and ruins around it. They may see evidences of a clear-sighted sagacity, which, piercing the thin veil of insidious friendship proffered by the Spaniards, and penetrating the future, discerned the coming miseries of his country; the noble patriotism of one who would rescue that country at any cost, and, amidst the gathering darkness, would infuse his own intrepid spirit into the hearts of his nation, to animate them to a last struggle for independence.

CHAPTER IV.

DISCONTENTS IN THE ARMY.—TLASCALAN SPIES.—PEACE WITH THE REPUBLIC.—EMBASSY FROM MONTEZUMA.

1519.

DESIROUS to keep up the terror of the Castilian name by leaving the enemy no respite, Cortés, on the same day that he despatched the embassy to Tlascala, put himself at the head of a small corps of cavalry and light troops to scour the neighboring country. He was at that time so ill from fever, aided by medical treatment,[1] that he could hardly keep his seat in the saddle. It was a rough country, and the sharp winds from the frosty summits of the mountains pierced the scanty covering of the troops and chilled both men and horses. Four or five of the animals gave out, and the general, alarmed for their safety, sent them back to the camp. The soldiers, discouraged by this ill omen, would have persuaded him to return. But he made answer, "We fight under the banner of the Cross;

[1] The effect of the medicine—though rather a severe dose, according to the precise Diaz—was suspended during the general's active exertions. Gomara, however, does not consider this a miracle. (Crónica, cap. 49.) Father Sandoval does. (Hist. de Cárlos Quinto, tom. i. p. 127.) Solís, after a conscientious inquiry into this perplexing matter, decides—strange as it may seem—against the father! Conquista, lib. 2, cap. 20.

God is stronger than nature,"[2] and continued his march.

It led through the same kind of checkered scenery of rugged hill and cultivated plain as that already described, well covered with towns and villages, some of them the frontier posts occupied by the Otomies. Practising the Roman maxim of lenity to the submissive foe, he took full vengeance on those who resisted, and, as resistance too often occurred, marked his path with fire and desolation. After a short absence, he returned in safety, laden with the plunder of a successful foray. It would have been more honorable to him had it been conducted with less rigor. The excesses are imputed by Bernal Diaz to the Indian allies, whom in the heat of victory it was found impossible to restrain.[3] On whose head soever they fall, they seem to have given little uneasiness to the general, who declares in his letter to the emperor Charles the Fifth, "As we fought under the standard of the Cross,[4] for

[2] "Dios es sobre natura." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 54.

[3] Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 64.—Not so Cortés, who says, boldly, "I burned more than ten towns." (Ibid., p. 52.) His reverend commentator specifies the localities of the Indian towns destroyed by him in his forays. Viaje, ap. Lorenzana, pp. ix.–xi.

[4] [Lorenzana speaks of two standards as borne by Cortés in the Conquest, one having the image of the Virgin emblazoned on it, the other that of the Cross. It may be the latter which is still preserved in the Museum of Artillery at Madrid. (Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 52, nota.) In a letter written to me from that capital, a few years since, by my friend Mr. George Summer, he remarks, "In Madrid, in the Museum of Artillery, is a small mahogany box, about a foot square, locked and sealed, which contains, as the inscription above it states, the *pendon* which Hernan Cortés carried to the conquest of Mexico. On applying to the Brigadier Leon de Palacio,

the true Faith, and the service of your Highness, Heaven crowned our arms with such success that, while multitudes of the infidel were slain, little loss was suffered by the Castilians."[5] The Spanish Conquerors, to judge from their writings, unconscious of any worldly motive lurking in the bottom of their hearts, regarded themselves as soldiers of the Church, fighting the great battle of Christianity, and in the same edifying and comfortable light are regarded by most of the national historians of a later day.[6]

On his return to the camp, Cortés found a new cause of disquietude, in discontents which had broken out among the soldiery. Their patience was exhausted by a life of fatigue and peril to which there seemed to be no end. The battles they had won against such tremendous odds had not advanced them a jot. The idea of their reaching Mexico, says the old soldier so often quoted, "was treated as a jest by the whole army;"[7]

the director of the museum, he was so kind as not only to order this to be opened, but to come himself with me to examine it. The standard is probably the same which Lorenzana, in 1770, speaks of as being then in the Secretario de Gobierno. It is of red Damascus silk, and has marks of the painting once upon it, but is now completely in rags."]

5 "É como trayamos la Bandera de la Cruz, y puñabamos por nuestra Fe, y por servicio de Vuestra Sacra Magestad, en su muy Real ventura nos dió Dios tanta victoria, que les matámos mucha gente, sin que los nuestros recibiessen daño." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 52.

6 "It was a notable thing," exclaims Herrera, "to see with what humility and devotion all returned praising God, who gave them victories so miraculous, by which it was clearly apparent that they were favored with the divine assistance."

7 "Porque entrar en México, teníamoslo por cosa de risa, á causa de sus grandes fuerças." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 66.

and the indefinite prospect of hostilities with the ferocious people among whom they were now cast threw a deep gloom over their spirits.

Among the malecontents were a number of noisy, vaporing persons, such as are found in every camp, who, like empty bubbles, are sure to rise to the surface and make themselves seen in seasons of agitation. They were, for the most part, of the old faction of Velasquez, and had estates in Cuba, to which they turned many a wistful glance as they receded more and more from the coast. They now waited on the general, not in a mutinous spirit of resistance (for they remembered the lesson in Villa Rica), but with the design of frank expostulation, as with a brother adventurer in a common cause.[8] The tone of familiarity thus assumed was eminently characteristic of the footing of equality on which the parties in the expedition stood with one another.

Their sufferings, they told him, were too great to be endured. All the men had received one, most of them two or three wounds. More than fifty had perished, in one way or another, since leaving Vera Cruz. There was no beast of burden but led a life preferable to theirs. For, when the night came, the former could rest from his labors; but they, fighting or watching, had no rest, day nor night. As to conquering Mexico,

[8] Diaz indignantly disclaims the idea of mutiny, which Gomara attached to this proceeding. "What they said to him was by way of counsel, and because they believed it were well said, and not with any other intent, since they followed him ever, bravely and loyally; nor is it strange that in an army some good soldiers should offer counsel to their captain, especially when such hardships have been endured as were by us." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 71.

the very thought of it was madness. If they had encountered such opposition from the petty republic of Tlascala, what might they not expect from the great Mexican empire? There was now a temporary suspension of hostilities. They should avail themselves of it to retrace their steps to Vera Cruz. It is true, the fleet there was destroyed; and by this act, unparalleled for rashness even in Roman annals, the general had become responsible for the fate of the whole army. Still there was one vessel left. That might be despatched to Cuba for reinforcements and supplies; and, when these arrived, they would be enabled to resume operations with some prospect of success.

Cortés listened to this singular expostulation with perfect composure. He knew his men, and, instead of rebuke or harsher measures, replied in the same frank and soldier-like vein which they had affected.

There was much truth, he allowed, in what they said. The sufferings of the Spaniards had been great; greater than those recorded of any heroes in Greek or Roman story. So much the greater would be their glory. He had often been filled with admiration as he had seen his little host encircled by myriads of barbarians, and felt that no people but Spaniards could have triumphed over such formidable odds. Nor could they, unless the arm of the Almighty had been over them. And they might reasonably look for his protection hereafter; for was it not in his cause they were fighting? They had encountered dangers and difficulties, it was true. But they had not come here expecting a life of idle dalliance and pleasure. Glory, as he had told them at the outset, was to be won only by toil and danger. They

would do him the justice to acknowledge that he had never shrunk from his share of both. This was a truth, adds the honest chronicler who heard and reports the dialogue, which no one could deny. But, if they had met with hardships, he continued, they had been everywhere victorious. Even now they were enjoying the fruits of this, in the plenty which reigned in the camp. And they would soon see the Tlascalans, humbled by their late reverses, suing for peace on any terms. To go back now was impossible. The very stones would rise up against them. The Tlascalans would hunt them in triumph down to the water's edge. And how would the Mexicans exult at this miserable issue of their vainglorious vaunts! Their former friends would become their enemies; and the Totonacs, to avert the vengeance of the Aztecs, from which the Spaniards could no longer shield them, would join in the general cry. There was no alternative, then, but to go forward in their career. And he besought them to silence their pusillanimous scruples, and, instead of turning their eyes towards Cuba, to fix them on Mexico, the great object of their enterprise.

While this singular conference was going on, many other soldiers had gathered round the spot; and the discontented party, emboldened by the presence of their comrades, as well as by the general's forbearance, replied that they were far from being convinced. Another such victory as the last would be their ruin. They were going to Mexico only to be slaughtered. Until, at length, the general's patience being exhausted, he cut the argument short, by quoting a verse from an old song, implying that it was better to die with honor

than to live disgraced,—a sentiment which was loudly echoed by the greater part of his audience, who, notwithstanding their occasional murmurs, had no design to abandon the expedition, still less the commander to whom they were passionately devoted. The malecontents, disconcerted by this rebuke, slunk back to their own quarters, muttering half-smothered execrations on the leader who had projected the enterprise, the Indians who had guided him, and their own countrymen who supported him in it.[9]

Such were the difficulties that lay in the path of Cortés: a wily and ferocious enemy; a climate uncertain, often unhealthy; illness in his own person, much aggravated by anxiety as to the manner in which his conduct would be received by his sovereign; last, not least, disaffection among his soldiers, on whose constancy and union he rested for the success of his operations,—the great lever by which he was to overturn the empire of Montezuma.

On the morning following this event, the camp was surprised by the appearance of a small body of Tlascalans, decorated with badges, the white color of which intimated peace. They brought a quantity of provisions, and some trifling ornaments, which, they said, were sent by the Tlascalan general, who was weary of

9 This conference is reported, with some variety, indeed, by nearly every historian. (Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 55.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 3.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 51, 52.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 80.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 9.—P. Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 2.) I have abridged the account given by Bernal Diaz, one of the audience, though not one of the parties to the dialogue,—for that reason the better authority.

the war and desired an accommodation with the Spaniards. He would soon present himself to arrange this in person. The intelligence diffused general joy, and the emissaries received a friendly welcome.

A day or two elapsed, and, while a few of the party left the Spanish quarters, the others, about fifty in number, who remained, excited some distrust in the bosom of Marina. She communicated her suspicions to Cortés that they were spies. He caused several of them, in consequence, to be arrested, examined them separately, and ascertained that they were employed by Xicotencatl to inform him of the state of the Christian camp, preparatory to a meditated assault, for which he was mustering his forces. Cortés, satisfied of the truth of this, determined to make such an example of the delinquents as should intimidate his enemy from repeating the attempt. He ordered their hands to be cut off, and in that condition sent them back to their countrymen, with the message "that the Tlascalans might come by day or night; they would find the Spaniards ready for them."[10]

The doleful spectacle of their comrades returning in this mutilated state filled the Indian camp with horror and consternation. The haughty crest of their chief was humbled. From that moment he lost his wonted buoyancy and confidence. His soldiers, filled with superstitious fear, refused to serve longer against a foe

[10] Diaz says only seventeen lost their hands, the rest their thumbs. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 70.) Cortés does not flinch from confessing, the hands of the whole fifty: "I ordered that all the fifty should have their hands cut off; and I sent them to tell their lord that let him come when he would, by night or day, they should see who we were." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 53.

who could read their very thoughts and divine their plans before they were ripe for execution."[11]

The punishment inflicted by Cortés may well shock the reader by its brutality. But it should be considered, in mitigation, that the victims of it were spies, and, as such, by the laws of war, whether among civilized or savage nations, had incurred the penalty of death. The amputation of the limbs was a milder punishment, and reserved for inferior offences. If we revolt at the barbarous nature of the sentence, we should reflect that it was no uncommon one at that day; not more uncommon, indeed, than whipping and branding with a hot iron were in our own country at the beginning of the present century, or than cropping the ears was in the preceding one. A higher civilization, indeed, rejects such punishments, as pernicious in themselves, and degrading to humanity. But in the sixteenth century they were openly recognized by the laws of the most polished nations in Europe. And it is too much to ask of any man, still less one bred to the iron trade of war, to be in advance of the refinement of his age. We may be content if, in circumstances so unfavorable to humanity, he does not fall below it.

All thoughts of further resistance being abandoned, the four delegates of the Tlascalan republic were now allowed to proceed on their mission. They were speedily followed by Xicotencatl himself, attended by a numerous train of military retainers. As they drew

[11] "De que los Tlascaltecas se admiráron, entendiendo que Cortés les entendia sus pensamientos." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83.

near the Spanish lines, they were easily recognized by the white and yellow colors of their uniforms, the livery of the house of Titcala. The joy of the army was great at this sure intimation of the close of hostilities; and it was with difficulty that Cortés was enabled to restore the men to tranquillity and the assumed indifference which it was proper to maintain in presence of an enemy.

The Spaniards gazed with curious eye on the valiant chief who had so long kept his enemies at bay, and who now advanced with the firm and fearless step of one who was coming rather to bid defiance than to sue for peace. He was rather above the middle size, with broad shoulders, and a muscular frame intimating great activity and strength. His head was large, and his countenance marked with the lines of hard service rather than of age, for he was but thirty-five. When he entered the presence of Cortés, he made the usual salutation by touching the ground with his hand and carrying it to his head; while the sweet incense of aromatic gums rolled up in clouds from the censers carried by his slaves.

Far from a pusillanimous attempt to throw the blame on the senate, he assumed the whole responsibility of the war. He had considered the white men, he said, as enemies, for they came with the allies and vassals of Montezuma. He loved his country, and wished to preserve the independence which she had maintained through her long wars with the Aztecs. He had been beaten. They might be the strangers who, it had been so long predicted, would come from the east, to take possession of the country. He hoped they would use

their victory with moderation, and not trample on the liberties of the republic. He came now in the name of his nation, to tender their obedience to the Spaniards, assuring them they would find his countrymen as faithful in peace as they had been firm in war.

Cortés, far from taking umbrage, was filled with admiration at the lofty spirit which thus disdained to stoop beneath misfortunes. The brave man knows how to respect bravery in another. He assumed, however, a severe aspect, as he rebuked the chief for having so long persisted in hostilities. Had Xicotencatl believed the word of the Spaniards, and accepted their proffered friendship sooner, he would have spared his people much suffering, which they well merited by their obstinacy. But it was impossible, continued the general, to retrieve the past. He was willing to bury it in oblivion, and to receive the Tlascalans as vassals to the emperor, his master. If they proved true, they should find him a sure column of support; if false, he would take such vengeance on them as he had intended to take on their capital had they not speedily given in their submission. It proved an ominous menace for the chief to whom it was addressed.

The cacique then ordered his slaves to bring forward some trifling ornaments of gold and feather-embroidery, designed as presents. They were of little value, he said, with a smile, for the Tlascalans were poor. They had little gold, not even cotton, nor salt. The Aztec emperor had left them nothing but their freedom and their arms. He offered this gift only as a token of his good will. "As such I receive it," answered Cortés, "and, coming from the Tlascalans, set more

value on it than I should from any other source, though it were a house full of gold;"—a politic as well as magnanimous reply, for it was by the aid of this good will that he was to win the gold of Mexico.[12]

Thus ended the bloody war with the fierce republic of Tlascala, during the course of which the fortunes of the Spaniards more than once had trembled in the balance. Had it been persevered in but a little longer, it must have ended in their confusion and ruin, exhausted as they were by wounds, watching, and fatigues, with the seeds of disaffection rankling among themselves. As it was, they came out of the fearful contest with untarnished glory. To the enemy they seemed invulnerable, bearing charmed lives, proof alike against the accidents of fortune and the assaults of man. No wonder that they indulged a similar conceit in their own bosoms, and that the humblest Spaniard should have fancied himself the subject of a special interposition of Providence, which shielded him in the hour of battle and reserved him for a higher destiny.

While the Tlascalans were still in the camp, an embassy was announced from Montezuma. Tidings of the exploits of the Spaniards had spread far and wide over the plateau. The emperor, in particular, had watched every step of their progress, as they climbed the steeps of the Cordilleras and advanced over the broad table-land on their summit. He had seen them, with great satisfaction, take the road to Tlascala,

[12] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 56, 57.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 3.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 53.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 71, et seq.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 11.

trusting that, if they were mortal men, they would find their graves there. Great was his dismay when courier after courier brought him intelligence of their successes, and that the most redoubtable warriors on the plateau had been scattered like chaff by the swords of this handful of strangers.

His superstitious fears returned in full force. He saw in the Spaniards "the men of destiny," who were to take possession of his sceptre. In his alarm and uncertainty, he sent a new embassy to the Christian camp. It consisted of five great nobles of his court, attended by a train of two hundred slaves. They brought with them a present, as usual, dictated partly by fear and in part by the natural munificence of his disposition. It consisted of three thousand ounces of gold, in grains, or in various manufactured articles, with several hundred mantles and dresses of embroidered cotton and the picturesque feather-work. As they laid these at the feet of Cortés, they told him they had come to offer the congratulations of their master on the late victories of the white men. The emperor only regretted that it would not be in his power to receive them in his capital, where the numerous population was so unruly that their safety would be placed in jeopardy. The mere intimation of the Aztec emperor's wishes, in the most distant way, would have sufficed with the Indian nations. It had very little weight with the Spaniards; and the envoys, finding this puerile expression of them ineffectual, resorted to another argument, offering a tribute in their master's name to the Castilian sovereign, provided the Spaniards would relinquish their visit to his capital. This

was a greater error: it was displaying the rich casket with one hand which he was unable to defend with the other. Yet the author of this pusillanimous policy, the unhappy victim of superstition, was a monarch renowned among the Indian nations for his intrepidity and enterprise,—the terror of Anahuac!

Cortés, while he urged his own sovereign's commands as a reason for disregarding the wishes of Montezuma, uttered expressions of the most profound respect for the Aztec prince, and declared that if he had not the means of requiting his munificence, as he could wish, at present, he trusted *to repay him, at some future day, with good works!*[13]

The Mexican ambassadors were not much gratified with finding the war at an end, and a reconciliation established between their mortal enemies and the Spaniards. The mutual disgust of the two parties with each other was too strong to be repressed even in the presence of the general, who saw with satisfaction the evidences of a jealousy which, undermining the strength of the Indian emperor, was to prove the surest source of his own success.[14]

[13] "Cortés recibió con alegría aquel presente, y dixo que se lo tenia en merced, y que él lo pagaria al señor Monteçuma en buenas obras." Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 73.

[14] He dwells on it in his letter to the emperor. "Seeing the discord and division between them, I felt not a little pleasure, for it appeared to me to suit well with my design, and that through this means I might the more easily subjugate them. Moreover I remembered a text of the Evangelist, which says, 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation.' I treated therefore with both parties, and thanked each in secret for the intelligence it had given me, professing to regard it with greater friendship than the other." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 61.

Two of the Aztec envoys returned to Mexico, to acquaint their sovereign with the state of affairs in the Spanish camp. The others remained with the army, Cortés being willing that they should be personal spectators of the deference shown him by the Tlascalans. Still he did not hasten his departure for their capital. Not that he placed reliance on the injurious intimations of the Mexicans respecting their good faith. Yet he was willing to put this to some longer trial, and at the same time to re-establish his own health more thoroughly before his visit. Meanwhile, messengers daily arrived from the city, pressing his journey, and were finally followed by some of the aged rulers of the republic, attended by a numerous retinue, impatient of his long delay. They brought with them a body of five hundred *tamanes*, or *men of burden*, to drag his cannon and relieve his own forces from this fatiguing part of their duty. It was impossible to defer his departure longer; and after mass, and a solemn thanksgiving to the great Being who had crowned their arms with triumph, the Spaniards bade adieu to the quarters which they had occupied for nearly three weeks on the hill of Tzompach. The strong tower, or *teocalli*, which commanded it, was called, in commemoration of their residence, "the tower of victory;" and the few stones which still survive of its ruins point out to the eye of the traveller a spot ever memorable in history for the courage and constancy of the early Conquerors.[15]

[15] Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 10.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 4.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 54.—Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 2.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 72–74.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83.

CHAPTER V.

SPANIARDS ENTER TLASCALA. — DESCRIPTION OF THE CAPITAL. — ATTEMPTED CONVERSION. — AZTEC EMBASSY. — INVITED TO CHOLULA.

1519.

THE city of Tlascala, the capital of the republic of the same name, lay at the distance of about six leagues from the Spanish camp. The road led into a hilly region, exhibiting in every arable patch of ground the evidence of laborious cultivation. Over a deep *barranca*, or ravine, they crossed on a bridge of stone, which, according to tradition,—a slippery authority,—is the same still standing, and was constructed originally for the passage of the army.[1] They passed some considerable towns on their route, where they experienced a full measure of Indian hospitality. As they advanced, the approach to a populous city was intimated by the crowds who flocked out to see and

[1] "Á distancia de un quarto de legua caminando á esta dicha ciudad se encuentra una barranca honda, que tiene para pasar *un Puente de cal y canto de bóveda*, y es tradicion en el pueblo de San Salvador, que se hizo en aquellos dias, que estubo allí Cortés para que pasase." (Viaje, ap. Lorenzana, p. xi.) If the antiquity of this *arched* stone bridge could be established, it would settle a point much mooted in respect to Indian architecture. But the construction of so solid a work in so short a time is a fact requiring a better voucher than the villagers of San Salvador.

welcome the strangers; men and women in their picturesque dresses, with bunches and wreaths of roses, which they gave to the Spaniards, or fastened to the necks and caparisons of their horses, in the same manner as at Cempoalla. Priests, with their white robes, and long matted tresses floating over them, mingled in the crowd, scattering volumes of incense from their burning censers. In this way, the multitudinous and motley procession defiled through the gates of the ancient capital of Tlascala. It was the twenty-third of September, 1519, the anniversary of which is still celebrated by the inhabitants as a day of jubilee.[2]

The press was now so great that it was with difficulty the police of the city could clear a passage for the army; while the *azoteas*, or flat terraced roofs of the buildings, were covered with spectators, eager to catch a glimpse of the wonderful strangers. The houses were hung with festoons of flowers, and arches of verdant boughs, interwined with roses and honeysuckle, were thrown across the streets. The whole population abandoned itself to rejoicing; and the air was rent with songs and shouts of triumph, mingled with the wild music of the national instruments, that might have excited apprehensions in the breasts of the soldiery had they not gathered their peaceful import from the assurance of Marina and the joyous countenances of the natives.

[2] Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. iii. p. 53.—"Recibimiento el mas solene y famoso que en el mundo se ha visto," exclaims the enthusiastic historian of the republic. He adds that "more than a hundred thousand men flocked out to receive the Spaniards; a thing that appears impossible," *que parece cosa imposible!* It does indeed. Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

With these accompaniments, the procession moved along the principal streets to the mansion of Xicotencatl, the aged father of the Tlascalan general, and one of the four rulers of the republic. Cortés dismounted from his horse to receive the old chieftain's embrace. He was nearly blind, and satisfied, as far as he could, a natural curiosity respecting the person of the Spanish general, by passing his hand over his features. He then led the way to a spacious hall in his palace, where a banquet was served to the army. In the evening they were shown to their quarters, in the buildings and open ground surrounding one of the principal *teocallis;* while the Mexican ambassadors, at the desire of Cortés, had apartments assigned them next to his own, that he might the better watch over their safety in this city of their enemies.[3]

Tlascala was one of the most important and populous towns on the table-land. Cortés, in his letter to the emperor, compares it to Granada, affirming that it was larger, stronger, and more populous than the Moorish capital at the time of the conquest, and quite as well built.[4] But, notwithstanding we are assured by a most respectable writer at the close of the last

[3] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 11.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 59. — Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS. —Gomara, Crónica, cap. 54.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 11.

[4] "La qual ciudad es tan grande, y de tanta admiracion, que aunque mucho de lo, que de ella podria decir, dexe, lo poco que diré creo es casi increible, porque es muy mayor que Granada, y muy mas fuerte, y de tan buenos Edificios, y de muy mucha mas gente, que Granada tenia al tiempo que se ganó." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 58.

century that its remains justify the assertion,[5] we shall be slow to believe that its edifices could have rivalled those monuments of Oriental magnificence, whose light, aerial forms still survive after the lapse of ages, the admiration of every traveller of sensibility and taste. The truth is, that Cortés, like Columbus, saw objects through the warm medium of his own fond imagination, giving them a higher tone of coloring and larger dimensions than were strictly warranted by the fact. It was natural that the man who had made such rare discoveries should unconsciously magnify their merits to his own eyes and to those of others.

The houses were built, for the most part, of mud or earth; the better sort of stone and lime, or bricks dried in the sun. They were unprovided with doors or windows, but in the apertures for the former hung mats fringed with pieces of copper or something which, by its tinkling sound, would give notice of any one's entrance. The streets were narrow and dark. The population must have been considerable, if, as Cortés asserts, thirty thousand souls were often gathered in the market on a public day. These meetings were a sort of fairs, held, as usual, in all the great towns, every fifth day, and attended by the inhabitants of the adjacent country, who brought there for sale every description of domestic produce and manufacture with which they were acquainted. They peculiarly excelled in pottery, which was considered as equal to the best in Europe.[6]

[5] "En las Ruinas, que aun hoy se vén en Tlaxcala, se conoce, que no es ponderacion." Rel. Seg. de Cortés, p. 58. Nota del editor, Lorenzana.

[6] "Nullum est fictile vas apud nos, quod arte superet ab illis vasa formata." Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 2.

It is a further proof of civilized habits that the Spaniards found barbers' shops, and baths both of vapor and hot water, familiarly used by the inhabitants. A still higher proof of refinement may be discerned in a vigilant police which repressed everything like disorder among the people.[7]

The city was divided into four quarters, which might rather be called so many separate towns, since they were built at different times, and separated from each other by high stone walls, defining their respective limits. Over each of these districts ruled one of the four great chiefs of the republic, occupying his own spacious mansion and surrounded by his own immediate vassals. Strange arrangement,—and more strange that it should have been compatible with social order and tranquillity! The ancient capital, through one quarter of which flowed the rapid current of the Zahuatl, stretched along the summits and sides of hills, at whose base are now gathered the miserable remains of its once flourishing population.[8] Far beyond, to the southeast, extended the bold sierra of Tlascala, and the huge Malinche, crowned with the usual silver diadem of the highest Andes, having its shaggy sides

[7] Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 59.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 4.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 83.—The last historian enumerates such a number of contemporary Indian authorities for his narrative as of itself argues no inconsiderable degree of civilization in the people.

[8] Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 12.—The population of a place which Cortés could compare with Granada had dwindled by the beginning of the present century to 3400 inhabitants, of whom less than a thousand were of the Indian stock. See Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 158.

clothed with dark-green forests of firs, gigantic sycamores, and oaks whose towering stems rose to the height of forty or fifty feet, unencumbered by a branch. The clouds, which sailed over from the distant Atlantic, gathered round the lofty peaks of the sierra, and, settling into torrents, poured over the plains in the neighborhood of the city, converting them, at such seasons, into swamps. Thunder-storms, more frequent and terrible here than in other parts of the table-land, swept down the sides of the mountains and shook the frail tenements of the capital to their foundations. But, although the bleak winds of the sierra gave an austerity to the climate, unlike the sunny skies and genial temperature of the lower regions, it was far more favorable to the development of both the physical and moral energies. A bold and hardy peasantry was nurtured among the recesses of the hills, fit equally to cultivate the land in peace and to defend it in war. Unlike the spoiled child of Nature, who derives such facilities of subsistence from her too prodigal hand as supersede the necessity of exertion on his own part, the Tlascalan earned his bread—from a soil not ungrateful, it is true—by the sweat of his brow. He led a life of temperance and toil. Cut off by his long wars with the Aztecs from commercial intercourse, he was driven chiefly to agricultural labor, the occupation most propitious to purity of morals and sinewy strength of constitution. His honest breast glowed with the patriotism, or local attachment to the soil, which is the fruit of its diligent culture; while he was elevated by a proud consciousness of independence, the natural birthright of the child of the

mountains. Such was the race with whom Cortés was now associated for the achievement of his great work.

Some days were given by the Spaniards to festivity, in which they were successively entertained at the hospitable boards of the four great nobles, in their several quarters of the city. Amidst these friendly demonstrations, however, the general never relaxed for a moment his habitual vigilance, or the strict discipline of the camp; and he was careful to provide for the security of the citizens by prohibiting, under severe penalties, any soldier from leaving his quarters without express permission. Indeed, the severity of his discipline provoked the remonstrance of more than one of his officers, as a superfluous caution; and the Tlascalan chiefs took some exception at it, as inferring an unreasonable distrust of them. But, when Cortés explained it, as in obedience to an established military system, they testified their admiration, and the ambitious young general of the republic proposed to introduce it, if possible, into his own ranks.[9]

The Spanish commander, having assured himself of the loyalty of his new allies, next proposed to accomplish one of the great objects of his mission, their conversion to Christianity. By the advice of Father Olmedo, always opposed to precipitate measures, he had deferred this till a suitable opportunity presented itself for opening the subject. Such a one occurred when the chiefs of the state proposed to strengthen the

[9] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 11.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 54, 55.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 13.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 75.

alliance with the Spaniards by the intermarriage of their daughters with Cortés and his officers. He told them this could not be while they continued in the darkness of infidelity. Then, with the aid of the good friar, he expounded as well as he could the doctrines of the Faith, and, exhibiting the image of the Virgin with the infant Redeemer, told them that there was the God in whose worship alone they would find salvation, while that of their own false idols would sink them in eternal perdition.

It is unnecessary to burden the reader with a recapitulation of his homily, which contained, probably, dogmas quite as incomprehensible to the untutored Indian as any to be found in his own rude mythology. But, though it failed to convince his audience, they listened with a deferential awe. When he had finished, they replied they had no doubt that the God of the Christians must be a good and a great God, and as such they were willing to give him a place among the divinities of Tlascala. The polytheistic system of the Indians, like that of the ancient Greeks, was of that accommodating kind which could admit within its elastic folds the deities of any other religion, without violence to itself.[10] But every nation, they continued, must have its own appropriate and tutelary deities. Nor could they, in their old age, abjure the service of

[10] Camargo notices this elastic property in the religions of Anahuac: "Este modo de hablar y decir que les querrá dar otro Dios, es saber que cuando estas gentes tenian noticia de algun Dios de buenas propiedades y costumbres, que le rescibiesen admitiéndole por tal, porque otras gentes advenedizas trujéron muchos ídolos que tubiéron por Dioses, y á este fin y propósito decian, que Cortés les traia otro Dios." Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

those who had watched over them from youth. It would bring down the vengeance of their gods, and of their own nation, who were as warmly attached to their religion as their liberties, and would defend both with the last drop of their blood!

It was clearly inexpedient to press the matter further at present. But the zeal of Cortés, as usual, waxing warm by opposition, had now mounted too high for him to calculate obstacles; nor would he have shrunk, probably, from the crown of martyrdom in so good a cause. But, fortunately, at least for the success of his temporal cause, this crown was not reserved for him.

The good monk, his ghostly adviser, seeing the course things were likely to take, with better judgment interposed to prevent it. He had no desire, he said, to see the same scenes acted over again as at Cempoalla. He had no relish for forced conversions. They could hardly be lasting. The growth of an hour might well die with the hour. Of what use was it to overturn the altar, if the idol remained enthroned in the heart? or to destroy the idol itself, if it were only to make room for another? Better to wait patiently the effect of time and teaching to soften the heart and open the understanding, without which there could be no assurance of a sound and permanent conviction. These rational views were enforced by the remonstrances of Alvarado, Velasquez de Leon, and those in whom Cortés placed most confidence; till, driven from his original purpose, the military polemic consented to relinquish the attempt at conversion for the present, and to refrain from a repetition of scenes which, considering the different mettle of the population, might have been attended

with very different results from those at Cozumel and Cempoalla.[11]

In the course of our narrative we have had occasion to witness more than once the good effects of the interposition of Father Olmedo. Indeed, it is scarcely too much to say that his discretion in spiritual matters contributed as essentially to the success of the expedition as did the sagacity and courage of Cortés in temporal. He was a true disciple in the school of Las Casas. His heart was unscathed by that fiery fanaticism which sears and hardens whatever it touches. It melted with the warm glow of Christian charity. He had come out to the New World as a missionary among the heathen, and he shrunk from no sacrifice but that of the welfare of the poor benighted flock to whom he had consecrated his days. If he followed the banners of the warrior, it was to mitigate the ferocity of war, and to turn the triumphs of the Cross to a good account for the natives themselves, by the spiritual labors of conversion. He afforded the uncommon example—not to have been looked for, certainly, in a Spanish monk of the sixteenth century—of enthusiasm controlled by reason, a quickening zeal tempered by the mild spirit of toleration.

[11] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 84.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 56.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 76, 77.—This is not the account of Camargo. According to him, Cortés gained his point: the nobles led the way by embracing Christianity, and the idols were broken. (Hist. de Tlascala, MS.) But Camargo was himself a Christianized Indian, who lived in the next generation after the Conquest, and may very likely have felt as much desire to relieve his nation from the reproach of infidelity as a modern Spaniard would to scour out the stain—*mala raza y mancha*—of Jewish or Moorish lineage from his escutcheon.

But, though Cortés abandoned the ground of conversion for the present, he compelled the Tlascalans to break the fetters of the unfortunate victims reserved for sacrifice; an act of humanity unhappily only transient in its effects, since the prisons were filled with fresh victims on his departure.

He also obtained permission for the Spaniards to perform the services of their own religion unmolested. A large cross was erected in one of the great courts or squares. Mass was celebrated every day in the presence of the army and of crowds of natives, who, if they did not comprehend its full import, were so far edified that they learned to reverence the religion of their conquerors. The direct interposition of Heaven, however, wrought more for their conversion than the best homily of priest or soldier. Scarcely had the Spaniards left the city—the tale is told on very respectable authority—when a thin, transparent cloud descended and settled like a column on the cross, and, wrapping it round in its luminous folds, continued to emit a soft, celestial radiance through the night, thus proclaiming the sacred character of the symbol, on which was shed the halo of divinity![12]

The principle of toleration in religious matters being established, the Spanish general consented to receive the daughters of the caciques. Five or six of the most beautiful of the Indian maidens were assigned to as many of his principal officers, after they had been cleansed from the stains of infidelity by the waters of baptism. They received, as usual, on this occasion,

[12] The miracle is reported by Herrera (Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 15), and *believed* by Solís. Conquista de Méjico, lib. 3, cap. 5.

good Castilian names, in exchange for the barbarous nomenclature of their own vernacular.[13] Among them, Xicotencatl's daughter, Doña Luisa, as she was called after her baptism, was a princess of the highest estimation and authority in Tlascala. She was given by her father to Alvarado, and their posterity intermarried with the noblest families of Castile. The frank and joyous manners of this cavalier made him a great favorite with the Tlascalans; and his bright, open countenance, fair complexion, and golden locks gave him the name of *Tonatiuh*, the "Sun." The Indians often pleased their fancies by fastening a *sobriquet*, or some characteristic epithet, on the Spaniards. As Cortés was always attended, on public occasions, by Doña Marina, or Malinche, as she was called by the natives, they distinguished him by the same name. By these epithets, originally bestowed in Tlascala, the two Spanish captains were popularly designated among the Indian nations.[14]

While these events were passing, another embassy arrived from the court of Mexico. It was charged, as usual, with a costly donative of embossed gold plate,

[13] To avoid the perplexity of selection, it was common for the missionary to give the same names to all the Indians baptized on the same day. Thus, one day was set apart for the Johns, another for the Peters, and so on; an ingenious arrangement, much more for the convenience of the clergy than of the converts. See Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

[14] Ibid., MS.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 74, 77.—According to Camargo, the Tlascalans gave the Spanish commander three hundred damsels to wait on Marina; and the kind treatment and instruction they received led some of the chiefs to surrender their own daughters, "con propósito de que *si acaso* algunas se empreñasen quedase entre ellos generacion de hombres tan valientes y temidos."

and rich embroidered stuffs of cotton and feather-work. The terms of the message might well argue a vacillating and timid temper in the monarch, did they not mask a deeper policy. He now invited the Spaniards to his capital, with the assurance of a cordial welcome. He besought them to enter into no alliance with the base and barbarous Tlascalans; and he invited them to take the route of the friendly city of Cholula, where arrangements, according to his orders, were made for their reception.[15]

The Tlascalans viewed with deep regret the general's proposed visit to Mexico. Their reports fully confirmed all he had before heard of the power and ambition of Montezuma. His armies, they said, were spread over every part of the continent. His capital was a place of great strength, and as, from its insular position, all communication could be easily cut off with the adjacent country, the Spaniards, once entrapped there, would be at his mercy. His policy, they represented, was as insidious as his ambition was boundless. "Trust not his fair words," they said, "his courtesies, and his gifts. His professions are hollow, and his friendships are false." When Cortés

[15] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 80.—Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 60.—Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 2.—Cortés notices only one Aztec mission, while Diaz speaks of three. The former, from brevity, falls so much short of the whole truth, and the latter, from forgetfulness perhaps, goes so much beyond it, that it is not always easy to decide between them. Diaz did not compile his narrative till some fifty years after the Conquest; a lapse of time which may excuse many errors, but must considerably impair our confidence in the minute accuracy of his details. A more intimate acquaintance with his chronicle does not strengthen this confidence.

remarked that he hoped to bring about a better understanding between the emperor and them, they replied it would be impossible; however smooth his words, he would hate them at heart.

They warmly protested, also, against the general's taking the route of Cholula. The inhabitants, not brave in the open field, were more dangerous from their perfidy and craft. They were Montezuma's tools, and would do his bidding. The Tlascalans seemed to combine with this distrust a superstitious dread of the ancient city, the headquarters of the religion of Anahuac. It was here that the god Quetzalcoatl held the pristine seat of his empire. His temple was celebrated throughout the land, and the priests were confidently believed to have the power, as they themselves boasted, of opening an inundation from the foundations of his shrine, which should bury their enemies in the deluge. The Tlascalans further reminded Cortés that, while so many other and distant places had sent to him at Tlascala to testify their good will and offer their allegiance to his sovereigns, Cholula, only six leagues distant, had done neither. The last suggestion struck the general more forcibly than any of the preceding. He instantly despatched a summons to the city, requiring a formal tender of its submission.

Among the embassies from different quarters which had waited on the Spanish commander, while at Tlascala, was one from Ixtlilxochitl, son of the great Nezahualpilli, and an unsuccessful competitor with his elder brother—as noticed in a former part of our narrative—for the crown of Tezcuco.[16] Though defeated in his

[16] *Ante*, p. 306.

pretensions, he had obtained a part of the kingdom, over which he ruled with a deadly feeling of animosity towards his rival, and to Montezuma, who had sustained him. He now offered his services to Cortés, asking his aid, in return, to place him on the throne of his ancestors. The politic general returned such an answer to the aspiring young prince as might encourage his expectations and attach him to his interests. It was his aim to strengthen his cause by attracting to himself every particle of disaffection that was floating through the land.

It was not long before deputies arrived from Cholula, profuse in their expressions of good will, and inviting the presence of the Spaniards in their capital. The messengers were of low degree, far beneath the usual rank of ambassadors. This was pointed out by the Tlascalans; and Cortés regarded it as a fresh indignity. He sent in consequence a new summons, declaring if they did not instantly send him a deputation of their principal men he would deal with them as *rebels* to his own sovereign, the rightful lord of these realms![17] The menace had the desired effect. The Cholulans were not inclined to contest, at least for the present, his magnificent pretensions. Another embassy

[17] "Si no viniessen, iria sobre ellos, y los destruiria, y procederia contra ellos como contra personas rebeldes; diciéndoles, como todas estas Partes, y otras muy mayores Tierras, y Señoríos eran de Vuestra Alteza." (Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 63.) "Rebellion" was a very convenient term, fastened in like manner by the countrymen of Cortés on the Moors for defending the possessions which they had held for eight centuries in the Peninsula. It justified very rigorous reprisals. (See the History of Ferdinand and Isabella, Part I. chap. 13, et alibi.)

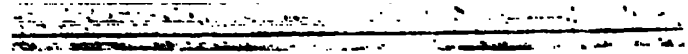
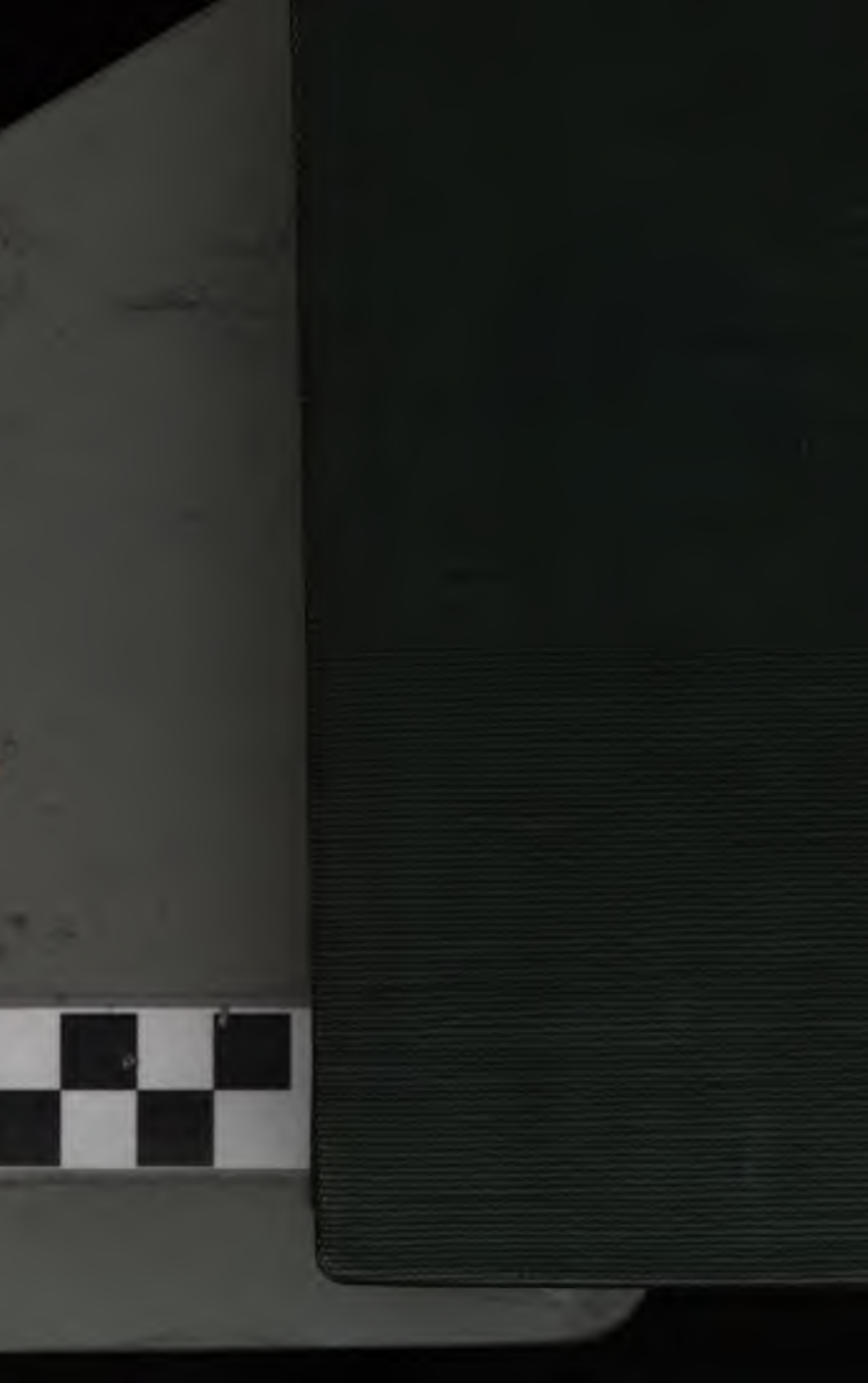
appeared in the camp, consisting of some of the highest nobles; who repeated the invitation for the Spaniards to visit their city, and excused their own tardy appearance by apprehensions for their personal safety in the capital of their enemies. The explanation was plausible, and was admitted by Cortés.

The Tlascalans were now more than ever opposed to his projected visit. A strong Aztec force, they had ascertained, lay in the neighborhood of Cholula, and the people were actively placing their city in a posture of defence. They suspected some insidious scheme concerted by Montezuma to destroy the Spaniards.

These suggestions disturbed the mind of Cortés, but did not turn him from his purpose. He felt a natural curiosity to see the venerable city so celebrated in the history of the Indian nations. He had, besides, gone too far to recede,—too far, at least, to do so without a show of apprehension implying a distrust in his own resources which could not fail to have a bad effect on his enemies, his allies, and his own men. After a brief consultation with his officers, he decided on the route to Cholula.[18]

It was now three weeks since the Spaniards had taken up their residence within the hospitable walls of Tlascala, and nearly six since they entered her territory. They had been met on the threshold as enemies, with the most determined hostility. They were now

[18] Rel. Seg. de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, pp. 62, 63.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 4.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 84.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 58.—Martyr, De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 2.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 6, cap. 18.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, MS., lib. 12, cap. 11.

to part with the same people as friends and allies; fast friends, who were to stand by them, side by side, through the whole of their arduous struggle. The result of their visit, therefore, was of the last importance; since on the co-operation of these brave and warlike republicans greatly depended the ultimate success of the expedition.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.